

# Father and Son

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# *Father and Son*

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*To my dear friends,  
To my Teachers,  
And above all to my Super Hero,  
My Father.....*

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# Preface

It is often seen that people around us are so much into themselves that they sometimes forget the most important things in life! This piece of art reflects the matter of love and relation through an adventure. There is a tiny and very thin differentiating path between visions and dreams and this story walks into that thin path.

I don't really know if it would relate with you or not, but I am sure, damn sure that after reading this through, you will at least once Google something! It presents you with utmost subtle way of recognizing yourself and important once. It is a coming-of-age self realizing story of all.

I would love to thank few personalities, because of which all this was possible. First, the Internet, my biggest source of help in completing this story. Next, Games..., and I play a lot. This story is inspired by True events and that helped me constructing the layout of the story.

But on a serious note, I would like to thank everyone who believed in me and supported me on my way ahead.

This story is a work of art and fiction and anything resemblance to the real world is just a fact or a mere coincidence. The places mentioned in the story are all real-life places with a few made up places. This story does not intent to hurt someone's feelings. Nor it tries to encourage any wrong doings. If coincidentally it does, then my sorry in advance!!

This is written with lots of love and efforts, I hope you will like this and appreciate it.

Akhilesh Ranjan Kumar  
A budding Writer

# Prologue

It was a dusky orange evening, but the early stars could be seen up in the deep and vast sky. The volcano at the far sight near the horizon was spewing out smoke, which was shining orange in the presence of orange sun light, that was adding to the atmosphere. Birds were flying away and there were commotions everywhere down the streets. A man was standing in his balcony watching all this. He could also see the spewing volcano at the horizon. He was smoking cigarette, and his face seemed sad as if he was pondering over something really hard with his eyes at the horizon. He took a deep drag from his cigarette, pivoted on to the balcony's wooden railing and puffed out the white smoke in the air, when his cell phone rang. He picked up the call and went back into his room with an intense look in his face.

It was a blue gloomy night and the full moon was shining white. The sphere was exceptionally bigger and brighter in the sky.. In between one of the quiet alleys of the streets, a man and a woman were standing and looking at each other. The hanging ropes across the buildings and open balconies could be seen easily with clothes hanging by on them. They were wearing clothes which looked like from, old English era and it seemed as if they both were in love. They came closer, to which woman was shy about. She held man's hand and they kissed.

A day in the museum, a young boy, wearing maroon t-shirt and grey pant was looking at an artifact. A black and finished figure in front of him. While he was standing there watching the figure, he felt a certain heaviness in the air as if the time was mourning. The timeline shifts and it dates back in the past, close to Egyptian era. The scene was reddish orange everywhere and a young sculpture was looking at a block of black granite which he brought from up hill in his room. His attire was completely different from what a modern man would wear. He was wearing full peplos with an oak leaf crown on his head. His room,....his room was spread with all kinds of sculpting tools, from chisel to hammers, all of varying sizes and weights. He might be thinking of sculpting or something else, he see! The time winds back into the museum where the young boy was gazing at that black figure.

# Chapter 1

"Can you see those stars, Mik!! Those dense bright twinkling stars." Mr. Federico asked his son pointing in the sky. "Yes father, I can see them. Those tiny little stars." Answered Mikkell. "Father can I have one of those in my room?" Mikkell asked turning to his father. "Aha...In your room!" Federico paused for a while and seemed like thinking, he then looked at his son with a smiling face. He bent over, kneel, grabbed Mik's both hands, and asked him to look again at the night sky.

"Of course you can have those in your bedroom, but before that, you need to promise me one thing."

"What?" Mikkell asked turning again towards his father.

"I want you to promise me, that you will grow strong and will always be with your mother. You will take care of her. Will you do that for me, young man." To this, Mikkell smiled and said, "That's it! I thought you will be telling me to finish my homework before I can go back to sleep."

"...Yeah, that too, but since we both are here, I hope you understand that...and...if you don't complete your homework, your mother will kill you first and then me for not able to complete his son's homework." Federico reacted staring Mikkell with his big eyes, trying to show how dangerous their mother was! Looking at his father's funny face, they both laughed sitting on the terrace floor watching the vast moonless sky.

"Ooh...look, the shooting star!" Federico pointing far at the horizon. "Fast Mik, make a wish." Mikkell stood up, looked at the shooting star, folded his hands, and closed his eyes till the star passes away. "So, what did you asked for?" Federico asked him while sitting on the floor. Mikkell opened his eyes and sat down beside him. "I am not telling you, if I will tell you, then it won't be fulfilled." Mikkell nodded. Federico was amazed at Mikkell's point. "True, very true. But at least a hint to your father! Just a little hint or something!" Federico looked at his son with his "baby" eyes. Mikkell looked at his father. They shared an awkward silence and then started to laugh out loud. So, loud that his mother down in the kitchen could hear it. Mikkell laugh was uncontrollably loud, he was rolling on the floor laughing. After a moment they calmed, and then they laid on the floor with the head facing directly up into the night sky and the only source of light was the terrace's white light at the head of the terrace door. A little breeze was whistling in through, just to flutter the stranding hairs of Mikkell. Mikkell looking at the sky said, "You are the best father in the world, *papa!*" Federico swiftly turned up to his son, looking at him who was looking at the sky smiling. Federico smiled back in peace placing his hand on Mikkell's head, whirling it. While Mikkell closed his eyes in the comfort of cool soothing breeze and his father's patting. Federico looked again at his son, and said in his mind, "I am not the best father in the world, Mik. I am the *worst* father!"

Young adult Mikkell woke up and found himself sleeping in his bed. He was all sweaty and found out that the fan was off once again. He beat up his head twice or thrice to come



back in his senses. He grabbed the table clock sitting on the table next to his bed. "Shit. Not again!" It was Monday at 9 am and he was late for work. In a hurry, he grabbed a toast, combed his wet hair, wore his blue shirt and black trousers, and grabbed the car key, locked the flat outside. For 5 years he had been living alone. No family and no relatives to come along.

He was at his work sitting in front of his desktop thinking about what his boss said earlier when he came to the office.

"Come...in, Mikkel... I was wondering where was our Star Employee?"

Mikkel entered the office, where most of the people were sitting next to their desks, typing in some codes and letting it compile while they were chatting with each other. As he peeked, he saw his boss was standing right in front of the office door with a smile on his little fat face. It was as if he was waiting for Mikkel for ages near the office door. It was the scene of every Monday and the employees knew this, so they didn't give a shot to the matter, instead, they keep on compiling their codes. But this time, his boss, Mr. Anderson was not alone, he was waiting with Mikkel's deskmate Dev. "You know what, I and your friend Dev were discussing and he told me that you will be on time. I disagreed. He bets and guess what, you just won me 5 grands!! Thanks, Mikkel..."

Mr. Anderson looked at Dev and Dev looked back at him. He looked as if Mr. Anderson was asking for his kidneys. He took out his wallet and handed over 5 grands to him. Mr. Anderson went back into his cabin. Mikkel exactly knows the scene, and he followed him to his cabin and came out after a while with disappointment.

"Hey, wanna grab some coffee!" He looked at Dev and said, "Yes." They both sat down at the cafeteria and were bitching about Mr. Anderson.

"Mikkel, I think you are using his kindness against him. It's not good. Now it's getting off the shelf." Mikkel took a sip of the coffee and then said, "I know, but I can't help it. I have tried everything to try not to be late on Mondays. But nothing worked." Mikkel whirled his coffee mug. " You remember when you kept knocking my door but I didn't open the door. And then finally when I opened, and we both were late!"

"Yeah! And you remember that day when you came to the office on your home clothes. That was too funny." Mikkel looked at Dev.

"Not for me!"

"Well, it surely was, for us!!" And Dev laughed.

"*Acha*, why is this so, that you always woke up late every Monday only! And not any other day." Dev inquired. "I don't know man. Every Monday, I have been having that same dream again and again. And it's been 5 long years." Mikkel took another sip from his cup. "That same dream with your dad!" Mikkel got sad. "Is there anything I can do?" Dev asked.

"No, it's fine."

"Buddy, it's been long since you had been to your home. I think you should take a break and go meet your family, your mother. Your father's..." Mikkel's sad face turned agitated. He answered furiously, "I don't want to talk about him!" Dev stood up and put his arms on Mikkel's shoulder. "I am serious about this. You should go and pay a visit." Dev then walked into the washroom. Mikkel seemed like thinking and then after a while he followed Dev. While they both were side by side peeing.

"I think you are right. I should go. Today only I will talk to the boss and he won't say no to me, for you know *why*!"

"Absolutely..." Dev chuckled. And they went back to work.

"Leave.....for a week...?" Mr. Anderson screamed at Mikkell. "Yes sir. I want to go to my home for a week. And I promise I will be back in no time." Mikkell assured him. Mr. Anderson looked Mikkell with suspicion and said, "Okay, but be back in time."

"Thank you, sir..." and he left the cabin. Suddenly an unexpected call came to Mikkell. It was Mother!

"Mother, how are you?" Mikkell spoke in excitement.

"I am fine, son. How are you? Never thought of calling your mother, hmm...!" Mikkell chuckled.

"No mother, it was not like that. I was...busy!" Something came into his mind.

"Busier than your mother...!"

"No mother, *acha* I have something to tell to you," Mikkell shouted with excitement.

"I have also something to say." Mother said.

"No, first me."

"Okay, say it, then." Mother said.

"I.am.coming.home." Mikkell was jumping with excitement. "Isn't that great, mother. I am coming after so long."

"That's..., that's nice."

"I am coming tomorrow morning."

"I will keep everything set for you, son."

"*Acha*, you also wanted to say something to me too, *naa*?"

"...yeah...no...yeah..., actually since you are coming, I will say it to you once you get home. Ok..." Mother stammered. "Okay..., here I come!!"

Away from the outskirts of the city, named Khajjiar situated in Himachal Pradesh, was Mikkell's house. The house was situated near the valleys where the Khajjiar lake could be seen easily with green fields all around to see. The lake water so fresh and cold, that one could die of hypothermia in minutes. The city is well known for its tourism and stands atop in being one of the hill stations of India. The forest greens, the mountain trees, and terrains, all this what Mikkell was missing for several years. He reached the airport the next day where the driver picked him and he was on his way home.

"Sir, you have not changed since the last time I saw you." Driver said. Mikkell chuckled.

"Really, but I can see you have changed a lot Shyam..."

"You remember my name, I thought you have forgotten me, your home, your father... You look exactly like him, sir!" This made Mikkell sad and angry at the same time.

"It's better you don't talk about him in front of me, Shyam." He looked on his phone, where he could see his reflection on the black screen. "And I don't look like him!" He said. And he started looking out from the car window, reviving his memory from the past.

He reached home. He dropped his carry bag and he went straight to his mother's room. She was not there. He asked the servant, where she was. He then ran to the backyard and saw her. Mother was arranging food chores for his only son, who was coming home after a long time. He saw her. She saw him. They rushed and embraced. "I missed you so much,

mother." Mikkel's eyes filled with joy. "I missed you too, son." She held his hand and escorted him showing what she had prepared for his arrival. "Look, I have made your favorite dishes...and your favorite *Gajar ka Halwa*." She was thrilled to show everything that she had done for him. Mikkel was very happy and so were the other members of the house. She used to live with her parent and 2 servants including the driver. The house was well decorated for Mikkel, and he felt really special. The house was not very big though with 2 floored house with a terrace, where he and Federico used to sit at night and stargaze. The stairway leading straight to the first floor and then to the terrace. The rooms from the carpet floor to the white ceiling, nothing had changed for 5 years. It was all the same.

"It felt the same. As I have left it. Nothing has changed, since then, mother." Mikkel said to his mother who was showing him everything again. She smiled. "It's because his memories are still in here. In this house. With us. And I don't want anything to change and let go of him." Her words were trembling a bit but she finished her sentence. Mikkel just looked at her with emotion, he didn't know what to say.

"Ok now, enough talking I want you to freshen up, take some rest and we will meet at the dinner table. I hope by that time our feast would be ready." Mother said holding back her grief. Before Mikkel could say or ask anything, he was pushed towards his room, where he went in. It was already evening when Mikkel reached his home. And now it was night when after a bit of leg stretch and rest, he was called down to have dinner.

At the dinner table, everyone sat down. The table was full of meals for all Mikkel's favorite. It was his night and he deserved it. Mikkel was about to start eating when his maternal grandfather Mr. Sanjay Mehta spoke, "We first pray to the almighty and ask for his blessing before taking the first bite, son." Mikkel stopped and looked at everyone in awkwardness. Everyone watched him. "Sorry!"

"Everyone holds the hands of each other." Mr. Sanjay Mehta instructed.

"We would like to thank God for the food we eat and drink. The work of the day and the legend that we make. We also ask for your blessings to stay with us forever in time we need and help us face them."

"Now we can eat." Mr. Sanjay Mehta said. Everyone started to eat. For a while, the noise that could be heard in the dining table was the noises of the cutlery striking against each other. "So, how's your work going, son?" Asked Mr. Sanjay Mehta. Mikkel looked and answered, "Pretty good, in fact, last month we cracked a billion dollars deal with a firm. So, yeah, it's going pretty good."

"Good...and how's New York? I mean what's the situation there?"

"Oh, It's incredible there. There are so many facilities and services. You should come to visit New York sometimes. I was thinking of taking my mother with me." To this, every other member stared at Mikkel as if he was about to explode. Mikkel thought he did something wrong but he kept muted as everyone was and finished his food.

The same night he visited the mother's room after eating. He knocked on the door. "Come in!" A voice came from inside. Mikkel entered the room and saw his mother was organizing her cupboard with clothes. "Oh, Mik! Come sit. I was just...never mind." Mikkel inspected the room and saw his father's photo hanging on the wall. He then looked at his mother. "Come in, sit!"

"I just came to see you."

"Well, you are watching me now." She smiled. Mikkel stepped in the room. "Mother, did I say something wrong down at the table?" She hesitated. After exhaling, she said, "...Well, you see, it's our home. My home, your home! And you know, we can't shift to another place permanently! I mean you might, if you wish but I can't. It's this house! And I can't leave it."

"Oh, So...sorry mother. But I didn't get it. I mean, Why?"

"It's simple, love. Love is what binds me here. If I go with you, I won't be able to love it anymore. It's this place, you see. The vibes, the energy. Everything is here."

"Everything is there too, mother. Better than this!" She smiled and looked at his father's photo on the wall. "Does it have your father's memory?" She asked. Mikkel took a deep breath and said in agony, "Why? Why are you stuck in there? He is gone. He is gone forever. And thank god, that he is gone! He was no good to us while he was alive and now he is no good to you after his death."

"He is your father, Mikkel."

"No, he is not my father. And he can't ever be. He doesn't deserve to be called as my father, not even he deserved a wife like you, mother." Mikkel's agony and pain could be felt in his words. "I have the only mother and it's you. Mother, please! It's past and I hate my past. Please don't ruin this." Mikkel was about to leave the room while his mother was sitting quietly on the bed looking out of the window. Mikkel stopped. "I almost forgot why I was here. I had bought a present for you. If you like, you could see it, I am keeping it on the shelf. And he left the room. He rushed straight to the terrace.

"I wonder where I would find you if you were not in your room." Mother said. Mikkel looked back and saw his mother standing near the terrace door looking at him. "And the answer is Terrace." She walked close to him and sat down on the floor beside him. "I am upset with you and I don't want to talk to you for the next 15 minutes," Mikkel said. Mother agreed with her lower lips and waved her hands on Mikkel's head. "But I am sure, I can talk to you without you talking to me." She reached her hand and said, "I liked it. Your present. And I will keep it forever with me."

"Mik, I know it hurts a lot and you hate talking about this. But someday you need to and you need to understand that your father was a good man, he might not be a father that you expected but he sure was a good man. I have wanted to tell you that I need you to go to Naples, Italy. The place where I met him and where you will meet him! I was waiting for this day to come so that I could finally tell you that your father was more than what he was! What you know! And you deserve to know, who he was. And there's only one way to explore that, visit Naples and you will know everything you need to know about." She took a small thin notebook from the back of her hand. It had a shabby brown cover and the pages looked century old. She showed it to Mikkel and said, "This diary is the starting point of knowing your father." She handed over it to Mikkel, which he took without any saying. "Now is the time, that you will understand very well and I want you to start understanding."

"Why this? If you already know who he is then tell me directly."

"I think someone's 15 minutes just got over!" Mother pointed out.

"I am not going anywhere, and not to know a man who's dead."

"Son, there are few things in life when you learn on your own and nobody teaches you. This is one of those things."

"This diary...this, -stupid- diary, this is what I need to know and imagine if I visit Naples and finds out who he was, and probably why he was too busy staying away from us. What difference will it make?" Mikkel stood up and walked up to the terrace boundary wall. She looked at the stars and said, "Then you will remember him for the memories you shared and not of the time spent apart!" Mikkel paused for a while and looked at the moonless sky. Mother came and placed her hand on his shoulder. "Don't you want that to happen, son?" And she handed her the notebook. And she went off from the terrace saying, "It will take time, son!"

He was all alone on the terrace with the diary and the empty sky. He sat down and opened the diary. As he opened the diary. The first page said, "*To my Son...*" He turns over the page and he saw a letter written on it.

*Dear Son,*

*We may have shared the flesh and blood but because of me, never the loving relationship that comes with a father and son. All I can offer you now is my words of regret and pain for not being the man and the father I should have. I am sorry I was so absent in your life. It pains me to think back to missing your school plays, your birthdays, and you grow into the man I always knew you would be. The man I wish I could have been. To you Mikkel, I leave everything I have. I have given my life to my work and many this would be enough but I know that it was you and your mother that had to pay the price. I loved her dearly but that was just not enough. I hope one day you will understand.*

*As an archaeologist, I was bound by the tangible, but as an artist, you are free to the imagination and the abstract. I know that you are capable of great things and the world is just waiting to see it.*

*In an almost final act of selfishness, I'd like you to come here to Naples and see the world in which I took refuge. There are 3 exhibits at the Archaeological Museum of Naples whose meaning through communion and study will truly reveal themselves and light a fire within you that will show you the way to live.*

*When you think of me, I hope it is of the memories we did share, and not of the time we spent apart. Mikkel, I wish you a good life. May the challenging days be swift, and the good last forever.*

*Yours truly,*

*Federico*

He closed the diary pages and just stared at the rest of the stars of the night. He didn't know what to think, what to do. He just wanted some time to digest all these. "Ok!", He then said and took off to his room.

## Chapter 2

The next day everyone in the house woke up and gathered for breakfast where Mikkel announced that he will be visiting Naples and will try to find what his father had left for him. He also told that he is good with zero expectations and will not entertain anyone if the visit doesn't fetch him anything. Everyone was full of joy and happiness. Mikkel's mother came closer embracing him saying, "I am so proud of you and your father would be too..." Mikkel was squeezed in by the forearms of his mother before he could say something. When she loosened her grip. "I am doing it for your mother. And that's it. I will go and visit and come back in around 6 days."

"Take whatever you want, but don't rush my son. Try to understand your father. Give him a chance. As he did."

After a few more days living in his house and talking to his boss about his holiday extension, to which he agreed after a lot of negotiation. He finally took off for Naples.

An Italian city situated in the Gulf of Naples on the western coast of southern Italy. Mikkel all night long was awake reading his father's diary in the flight. The words, particularly those in the letters were fusing in his brain. The city is particularly known for Art and Architecture and that could be seen even on the streets of Naples. As he got off the airport, he has met with the hot - Mediterranean climate. The climate and the fertility of the Gulf of Naples made it ideal for the holidays. He got off the plane and came out looking for a taxi or a cab, who can guide him through the address written in the diary. The place just outside was fully crowded with tourists all over the places and he could barely see any taxi free.

"Excuse me, could you take me to this address." Mikkel reached out to a local taxi driver, who was eventually sleeping in his taxi, showing him the diary page. The driver abruptly woke up and saw Mikkel standing near him, while he was snorting. His reddish-white face and sweaty brown shirt seemed to Mikkel that he must be really tired and might have stayed all night in this hot climate.

"*quale??*" The hot-tempered driver said. "Okay, now that you were awake. Could you take me to this address?"

"*carrià!! quale fa tu vulè?*" The short driver abruptly woke up, screaming, came out of his car, and stood right in front of Mikkel. He barely reached up till Mikkel's shoulders but his temper was way more than his height. "Shit! YOU KNOW ENGLISH!" Mikkel suddenly realized that he was in Italy, he tried to be as expressive as he can. His hands were moving more than his mouth. "ENGLISH...ANY ENGLISH."

"NO-NO-NO. NO ENGLISH..." The driver started waving his hands in straight No at Mikkel while he was going back in his car probably to sleep again. He was in no mood to entertain Mikkel. "BUT YOU SAID ENGLISH NOW!"

"I SAY NO ENGLISH...*arrivà luntano!*" Meanwhile, a yellow hat person was watching all this sitting on the concrete stairs, while Mikkel was pissing off that driver. "Okay, I guess that

was not a good start," Mikkel told himself. while he was standing on the pavement with his black trolley bag and a bag pack, he noticed that old person, who was looking at him. As Mikkel looked at him, he looked away and started walking towards his taxi car. "Hello..., hey...what do we say an old man in Naples," Mikkel asked himself. Mikkel started following him while he was on a run to his car avoiding him. But since he was old and healthy, he was blocked by Mikkel. "Could you take me to this address?" Mikkel stood in front of him and showed him the diary page. "Another English guy..." the old driver muttered to himself. He scanned Mikkel from top to bottom and looked him through suspicion. "Is there anything wrong?" Mikkel asked awkwardly. The driver then looked at the address and grunted, "THE PLACE IS FAR FROM HERE. I WILL TAKE EXTRA CHARGES." To this Mikkel was surprised. He took out his phone and showed him the map. "FAR...but it's just 5 km from here, see..."

"That's why I don't take English passengers." The old driver again muttered to himself. "BUT I WILL CHARGE EXTRA!"

"Why?"

"BECAUSE THIS CAR IS SPECIAL." Mikkel looked at the car, and said, "But..." The old driver raised his hand in no negotiation, "IF WANT TO GO, HOPE IN. OR ELSE DON'T WASTE MY TIME." Mikkel grabbed his bag and luggage and was about to leave to look for any other cab, when that old man stopped him, "HEY LISTEN... LOOK IT'S THE START OF THE DAY AND I DON'T WANT TO HAVE A MISFORTUNE. SO COME WITH ME. I WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR ADDRESS."

"No, I am fine," Mikkel said to that old grumpy driver. "DON'T BE SO RUDE TO ME. YOU ARE MY FIRST CUSTOMER AND I CAN'T LET YOU GO. OK FINE I WILL NOT CHARGE YOU ANY EXTRAS BUT PLEASE COME WITH ME. I WILL REACH TO YOUR DESTINATION SAFE AND SOUND."

Mikkel trusted him which was not easy and he gets into the car. As they drove through the airport and to the roads, the scenery changed. While in the car, he could visibly see the beauty of Naples and the graffiti walls. Driving past the gulf floor, he could see the beautiful sight of the Gulf of Naples, the coastal fronts, the blue sea. The clear blue sky, hot blazing sun, beautiful scenes everything he could see. The clean roads, people walking on the footpath, and the humming of the winds passing by.

"WHERE ARE YOU FROM?" the driver asked. "India!" Mikkel answered him while looking out of the window. "INDIA...AFTER A LONG TIME, SOMEONE FROM INDIA CAME IN FROM. LAST TIME AN INDIAN CAME AND HE SAVED MY LIFE. I THOUGHT YOU WERE AN ENGLISH MAN, THE WAY YOU WERE TALKING! I THOUGHT SO!"

"Yeah, I live in America, so I got that assent. But you don't suppose to like Englishmen, I see! Did they do something wrong with you?" Mikkel turned his head in and asked him. "DON'T ASK ME, MISTER. I CAN'T FORGET THAT DAY YET. IT'S BEEN AROUND 9 YEARS. BUT I STILL REMEMBER IT CLEARLY AS IF IT WAS TOMORROW!"

"What happened 9 years ago?" Mikkel started to show interest in his story.

"ONE FINE DAY, PROBABLY JUST LIKE THIS, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY BUT FOR ME IT WAS A STORM! SIR, YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME BUT IT'S TRUE, ONE ENGLISH GUY JUST POINTED A GUN AT ME! I WAS PISSING ON MY PANTS. BUT HIS EYES SHOW NO MERCY. HE WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT ME DOWN, UNTIL AN INDIAN MAN PROBABLY IN HIS LATE 30s SAVED ME FROM HIM. THANKS TO HIM THAT I AM STILL ALIVE."

"What did he do? Was he a policeman or something." Mikkel asked. "I don't exactly know who they both were, but they both were together! And that Indian guy convinced that English guy NOT TO SHOOT ME, INSTEAD LET ME GO AND IN RETURN I WON'T TELL ANYONE ANYTHING ABOUT THAT DAY." Driver added. "WELL, BUT THEY SURELY DRUGGED ME AND THE LAST THING I KNOW WAS....." Mikkel had his all ears. "WAIT, I CAN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS...SORRY!" Mikkel took a deep breath and hunched back on the seat. "Nice story..." he muttered. "I THOUGHT SO, THAT YOU WON'T BELIEVE ME AND I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO BELIEVE IT EITHER." The old driver said while adjusting his rear mirror and looking Mikkel through it. "I HAVE BEEN DRIVING FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS NOW, AND I HAVE SEEN MANY THINGS DURING THE WHILE COURSE."

"OK, ENOUGH OF MY TALKS. YOU TELL ME YOURS!" The driver asked Mikkel abruptly changing the subject. "YOU A TOURIST!" I am not a tourist. I am here for..... something else.." Mikkel looked out watching and noticing the change in scenery from far coastlines and colorful rooftops to close and congested streets of the city. "WELCOME TO NAPLES., SIR.." THIS IS THE REAL NAPLES YOU SEE. THERE ARE LOTS OF PLACES YOU CAN VISIT. ROYAL PALACE OF NAPLES, GALLERIA UMBERTO I, NAPLES CATHEDRAL AND MANY MORE. But wherever you go, beware of pickpockets. They are everywhere and always looking for people like you."

"So, you are a tour guide too..., no one told me that." Driver laughed. "SO HERE YOU ARE. YOUR DESTINATION HAS ARRIVED. AND DON'T THANK ME, JUST GIVE ME A TIP AND I WILL MORE THAN HAPPY TO LEAVE YOU HERE." The car stopped at a less crowded place near an alley. It was the residential area of the locals, Mikkel thought and looked around getting out of the car. He paid the old car driver with a tip and ward him off. "Ok, thanks."

"THANK YOU TOO AND DON'T FORGET TO CALL ME WHENEVER YOU NEED TRAVELING. HERE'S MY CARD AND HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON!" The driver handed a card to Mikkel and set off. Now Mikkel was all alone in a strange country. He doesn't know the language. Nor the people. All he had was a diary and an address to start.

Mikkel saw the address in the diary and then confirmed it with the signboard up on one of the lamp posts. The language was misleading for him, but all thanks to his translator app, it had helped him a lot guessing the toilets right and now the signboard but not the language which he could understand hearing to. He reached out to an old long restaurant nearby and thought of having something to eat. He reached out to the counter where a fat fair lady was sitting next to the counter watching something on her phone. As Mikkel reached there, she looked at him and stood up from her chair. She was wearing a red-flowered nighty and her hair was also worn in a tight bun. But as she was about to say something, Mikkel typed in something on his phone and showed it to her hoping that she could read it. She looked at it and to his surprise, she chuckled, "Oh...No need for that. I understand English and can speak too." Mikkel slowly pulled back his phone looking at her in amazed. "Thank god."

"Yes...you see it's a tourist place, so English learning was one of the necessities here. So, what would you like to have?"

"Is there anything special!" Mikkel inquired. "Everything about this place is special, son. You tell me, what specialty amaze you!"



"I was thinking, something light. How about this one! This seems nice to me." Mikkell looking at the menu near the counter pointed out one of the dishes which looked delicious. "Excellent choice dear... you take a seat and I will get back to you as soon as your order is ready." The old lady said. She shouted out Moho and a small kid around 10 to 12 years of age came out of a room. "Show this young man a seat and get his order ready," Moho asked Mikkell to follow him into the restaurant. When he got inside, he was amazed. The restaurant which looked so tiny and rusty-dusty from outside was fully decorated and equipped with every essential that a modern restaurant could have. The place was crowded too, it seemed that the place was very famous among the locals. Moho showed Mikkell the table next to the corner right one. The table was for 3 but since he was alone, he took the seat and waited for the order, looking around. The lighting, the wall of fame signed by celebrities showing the aura of the place he was in.

While he was passing his time, listening to the talks of the people around which he could not understand, his order came in. "There you go sir.." Moho came in with the dish. "Thank you Moho.." And he ran away. After finishing his food, he went back to the counter to pay the money. But the counter was occupied. He waited and then his turn came in. "So, young man, how was the food?" The old lady asked. "It was delicious. I never had such a good meal." He paid her and he was about to leave, but he asked one of the lamest questions he thought it would be. "Do you know anyone named Federico?" To this, the old lady's eyes widened up, took 2 steps back, and then looked Mikkell in his eyes. "Who...are...you?" She asked. "I am looking for some information regarding this place." And Mikkell showed her the address. "I thought since you lived here for long, so you might have heard of him, somewhere or sometimes."

"You didn't answer my question. Who are you?" She repeated with an intense tone this time. "He is my father!" Mikkell abruptly said even though he didn't want to say, but to know, he risked his tongue. "You are his son..." The old lady thumbed on her chair and was in a state of sudden shock looking at Mikkell. Mikkell saw all this, and one thing was clear to him that she knew him!

"Excuse me...the place. Do you know anything, where I can find the place." Mikkell asked her interrupting her amazement. "Oh...sorry!" She came outside the counter and asked one of her servants to watch the counter while she gets back. "Follow me!" She said. She came out of the restaurant and rushed into a gully right next to the restaurant. Mikkell followed her. After walking a distance, she clutched the railing of the stairs and started stepping. "You know it seemed like yesterday that your father bought this apartment and helped me get back on my foot." She said while she was struggling to climb the stairs till the 2nd floor. On the second floor, she reached one of the doors and inserted the key which she took out from her small carry bag around her waist. She opened up the door and the first thing, they both noticed was the abandoned look of the apartment. Soot and dirt everywhere. A thick layer of grey particles covering the whole place. Plus the smell, as if something does in and was left rotten inside. But the strange part was that the things were all in place, covered with white clothes. "You don't worry, I will get all this cleaned in no time." She assured Mikkell. "After what your father did for me, I can at least do this much." Mikkell didn't speak anything. He didn't like the association of him with a dead selfish man, who even after death is making him do his selfishness. And they both left the

place. "I will just call the caretaker and he will clean that up. Till then be my guest for some time. My house is right next to yours." She pointed towards the blue colored door next to the flat in the same gully in which he was residing. Mikkel looked at her grinning face and couldn't say no to her kind gesture.

After his apartment was all cleaned up for him. He shifted in. He saw a completely new look of the apartment. It was as if new. The apartment contains 3 rooms, including a kitchen. One bedroom, a living room with the kitchen attached to it, a bathroom and a study room with a balcony attached. All the rooms were well decorated. The sun-orange colored living room reminded him of his own home in New York. The kitchen at one side of the wall with 2 entrances, one leading to the study room and the other to the bedroom. The creamy walls with several photos hanging on them tell a long story. Those fat books on the shelf at the corner of the room, the statue right beside the door, and the study table standing adjacent to the balcony. Mikkel peeked in through the balcony and he could see the narrow gully from where he came in. He then passes through the living room went to the other part of the apartment. The bedroom with a sand-colored wall looked cozy. The wardrobe lined to one side of the wall didn't open. Mikkel tried opening it but it didn't. It was locked. "I will ask that old lady if she has a key for this?" The blue curtains filtering blue rays in the room right beside the wardrobe was magnificent. He reached the bed and noticed a small shelf there. He reached there and saw a book. There was only one book in there. "*LA GESTIONE IMPRENIDITORIALE DEI MUSEI*" written by LUDOVICO SOLIMA," Mikkel said and kept it aside. There was a photo hanging on the wall above the self, he got closer to have a better look. It was his mother's and father's smiling on their wedding day. He paused for a while. He then backed off and turned around to see another photo frame on the stool with the flower vase right next to the bed. He reached his one hand across the bed putting his knee on the bed to avoid the vase from falling and picked the frame from his other hand. It was his photo while he was born and Federico holding him in his hands while he was crying. Mikkel could see the happy face of Federico on the photo. The daylight sneering through the other window on the room right behind the bed was illuminating the blue blanketed bed, which was reflecting the poker face of Mikkel. He got back out of the room where he remembered that his bags were still at the entrance. He picked it up and sat on the only table with 2 chairs in the living room. He made himself a tea and unpacked his stuff in the bedroom. Later that night after eating his dinner back at the restaurant of that old lady's, when Mikkel laid on the bed. The constant thoughts about Federico were circling in his mind. "What's there in the Museum of Naples, what he wants to show me and the Dia.....diary....." He reached to Federico's diary and started reading the rest of the pages. And Mikkel didn't realize that while reading he fall asleep.....with the Diary slipped through his hands on the floor.

Mikkel woke up early the next morning around 4:37 am. It was early for him and the day was still dark. But since he woke up and he was full of his sleep he thought of taking a walk around the local area and market. He put down his feet on the floor, pushed himself hard from the bed and picked the diary and kept it on the table alongside.

Since the day was still dark, the lamp posts were still lit. The yellow light spreading across the street and on Mikkel's face, illuminating. The morning was a bit cold and Mikkel could feel the warmth of the yellow light on his face. He was walking down the lane and he saw

a few people emerging from their home probably for the morning walk or so. Some Young's were jogging along with a few oldies. The narrow streets and tall and colorful buildings glowing by the lights of those yellow lamps on the streets. The fresh, calm, and cold air to breathe seemed amazing to Mikkel. He didn't know where he was going, he was just following the streets and observing the start of the day in Naples. Women doing household chores, kids helping their mother in cleaning the door fronts. Then there strikes a very familiar sound of bicycle's bell on Mikkel's ears. He turned around to see and to his amaze, the paperboy, he saw. He got so nostalgic that it reminded him of his Malgudi Days. When he was small and the paperboy used to deliver the newspaper just outside the door and he used to receive it every morning for his father. The paperboy delivering the paper across every street. Mikkel stopped him and bought the paper from him, even though he didn't knew the language. He thought of doing so and he did. He then followed along the streets about a mile or so, when he heard the symphony of the sea and felt the cool breeze of it. He followed the path and ended up in a market near the coastline. No place in his way up till here was so active as it was in the market. As soon as he entered the market, the first thing he came across was the smell and soon he realized where he was. The seafood market used to be active during the morning when freshly loaded species used to get delivered in the market place. It was around 5:30 or so and the darkness was fading and dark blue sky was capturing the moment. As Mikkel walked through the market, he saw a loading truck undocking stuffs in big baskets that looked like sea animals to him. There were small stalls alongside the streets with a tarpaulin spreading on top as a cover, some having big umbrellas. As he was walking through he encountered several of the species of fish, prawns, crabs, eels, and many more, all kept and stored in the basket full of water to keep them fresh and alive. The long array of those baskets sometimes covering the entire street, barely giving space for the walkers to pass through. After passing through the market, he reached the end where he could see the clear sea Scape. The calm and cold air, as he intakes to breathe in through his lungs, he felt more reviving than ever. He waited there for few moments to embodied himself being in the moment watching the fishermen catching fishes on their sailboats and watching at the horizon where he could see an island floating. When the darkness was finally fully dethroned by the morning orange light of the sun, Mikkel tends to return and head for the apartment.

After returning and doing the normal morning chores, he made himself a cup of tea and bread and jam along with the tea. He called his mother. "Good Morning mother."

"Since, when did you start saying good morning and all hmm.." Mother nodded. "Seems like the place started to have an influence on you from the first day."

"It's nothing mother. I just felt like saying so."

"So, how's your day in Naples. Did you get a hotel?"

"Mother, I had just been here and I have not yet visited any of the places. And I am living in Fed.... father's old home. It's near the sea and it's still liveable!"

"I hope you will find what he wanted to show you, son!"

"Don't worry mother, I will get back as soon as possible. And trust me I will not take time on this. I will just go and come, that's it."

"Son..., there are few things in life that need attention and time to figure out. There's no hurrying, take your time and consider what your father wants to show you. Live it, cause this is the only way you will get to know him."

There was a pause. After which Mikkell said Goodbye and hang up the call.

He wore his maroon t-shirt and brown pants, took the only diary and phone and wallet along with him, and was ready to visit the place. He reached to the streets where he was greeted by that same old lady, the owner of the old long restaurant.

"Ah, Mr. Mikkell, Good Morning. How are you? Did you have a good night's rest?" The old was sitting just outside the restaurant on a stool while his servants were opening the restaurant doors. "Er...yes. I did have a good night's sleep and I am as good as I look. And how are you?" Mikkell was in a pretty good mood. "Very well thank you. So, where are you off to? Can I get you anything? Coffee?" The old lady asked while waving his hands to call Moho. "No thanks. I just had a cup of tea and bread. I am just heading out." Mikkell saying casually. "Anywhere exciting? Do you need any help finding it?" She asked encouragingly. "Umm.....yeah. Could you please point me the right way to the museum?" "Naples one?" She asked. "Yeah...!"

"Of course! If you keep walking left from here. You will eventually see it. But don't go on foot. It's about 8 km from here. I would suggest take a taxi or something." She said pointing to the left of the street. "Thank you again. I am looking forward to seeing the exhibitions."

"I am so glad to hear that. Your father would have liked that. Enjoy yourself." She said at last and head inside the restaurant. Leaving behind Mikkell in great tension. He turned around and started walking a distance up till the main road. There he caught a taxi and he was on his way to the Archaeological Museum of Naples!

## Chapter 3

The sun was shining bright and the climate was very dry. While Mikkel was on his way to the museum, his mind was constantly buzzing with all sorts of thoughts that he could have before he sees the museum and explores those 3 artifacts which his father mentioned in his diary.

The constant thoughts of artifacts were bending his minds. To relieve his mind, he turned his head out of the window to amuse himself. The picture that he was having in his head and have heard by others was proving wrong to him. The streets were clean and organized. Yes of course there were commotions at few places, but what would you expect from a tourist place. Tall colorful buildings and narrow alleys were the signature of Naples locals. The clean and organized streets were the signature.

"First-time sir?" The driver asked Mikkel looking through the rear mirror.

"Yes!" Mikkel answered still looking outside. "You see, many people come to Naples every day, and I have toured several of them." The driver said. "Nice, so what are the places to visit in here apart from where I am going right now." Mikkel turned to him. "Everything in here is a place to visit. From the Royal place of Naples to Naples pier. From Egg Castle to the Old Market. Everything is a place to visit! If you like shopping, we have got your back, we house the oldest known supermarket in the world, the Galleria Umberto I. If you are spiritual, we have your back, we house the most number of cathedrals and churches. And-and...and, if you are here and haven't tasted the food, then it's a waste. You see Naples is the hometown of Pizzas. And mind it, you will not only find the traditional one but there are more than 10 types of pizzas available. And..."

"I will!" Mikkel abruptly interrupting him and again turned outside, only visible to him was the tall buildings and in between those tall buildings were small and narrow streets. As the museum was nearing, the scene was shifting from tall buildings to monumental structures made up of marbles, granite, and other stones. The people around were gradually increasing and the statues near the corners were a showpiece. "Sorry, sir. I talk a lot. You seem upset?" The driver asked. "Is everything ok?"

"Yes... I am fine."

"We are about to reach sir... I think whatever is bothering you, you will have answers in there." The driver said pointing his finger at the front to a large marvelous building. "There, the Naples National Archaeological Museum!" Mikkel peaked through the windshield. He was stumped. The building was very large and humungous. The top dome of the museum, all Mikkel could see. The driver stopped. "Sir, that's it. No motorized vehicle is allowed in from this perimeter." Mikkel was surprised. "Why?" "Sir, it's for the safety of the museum and since this place is the world heritage site. Security is a more important thing here. So, I am no further allowed. You have to walk in from here. It's about 500-600m from here until you get to the doors."

"Ok, fine." Mikkel paid him and got off the taxi. "Thank you sir and beware of the pickpockets!" The driver whispered and took off from the place.

So, now all Mikkel had to do is walk about 500m to reach the actual entrance of the museum. As he started to walk in the little crowd, he can't miss but to stay for a while and amaze at the walls of the buildings with graffiti on them. Mikkel had always been very fond of art and painting and he used to do it in his leisure, but after his father's death, he left painting, because it used to remind Mikkel of his father. He still used to sketch though. When he saw those graffiti on the walls, he took out his father's dairy turned to a blank page and made a rough sketch of that. On his way, he was walking on the footpath where he could see several stores decorated in every manner to persuade passers. Mikkel was stopped by one of the owners who was having a small cafeteria nearby and was roaming around with a banner in his hands written, *Taste once, repeat tons!* And the owner screaming, "Come on Come on. Try our new delight ice cream coffee. For the first time, we are presenting you with the tastiest coffee in the house. Come on come on." The forehead covered black hair and brown thick beard with an apron around his neck, the coffee shop owner told Mikkel that he was a new owner and had just set up his cafeteria. The smudges on the apron matching with the beard over the white t-shirt reflected his experience. He was one healthy-looking young guy in his early 30s, with his eyes glittering with a passion opening his very own chain of the cafeteria, the world will know.

"Ah..., Good morning, how are we today, sir?" The owner asked Mikkel.

"Umm...I am okay, thanks, and you...!" Mikkel asked awkwardly. "I am great sir! Wanna try our best coffee in the world!"

"Ah, no thanks. I have to go. Thank you."

"You looked upset at me. Is there something on your mind?" The bearded owner asked.

"Something?? A lot on my mind!!" Mikkel stops and turns around to answer. "Well... there's nothing a large coffee can't cure?" He made up a special mug of coffee and handed over to him. Mikkel hesitated. "Take it, sir. This one's on the house." Mikkel still hesitated but took it. "Taste it and tell me how is it?" Mikkel took a sip. "Wow! It's so good." Mikkel widened his eyes. "This would help. Thanks." They sat down on the bench drinking coffee.

"Thank you, sir."

"So, how long you have been doing this?" Mikkel asked taking another sip. "Oh, I just started it and it's been about 3 months that I have been selling my homemade recipe of coffee."

"It's nice."

"And how do you know English?"

"It's a tourist place, sir. To communicate with you all, we need to learn it anyway. So we did. It's just observation and learning. And when your livelihood depends on the language, you learn fast!"

"True," Mikkel replied looking down at the mug.

"So, what's on your head?" The coffee owner asked putting both hands on the table and leaning forward.

"Just some family stuff. But I am on my way to the Archaeological Museum." Mikkel answered still looking down.

"Oh, Family?? Very complicated. But I hope you would find your way out through this. I don't want your day to be ruined at the museum."

"No, it's fine. I will just try and enjoy my day at the museum." Mikkel looked at him and answered assuring him.

"You won't be disappointed. Well, I won't keep you any longer. Have a great day, sir!" The owner stood up saying along with Mikkel. Mikkel was about to leave, but then he took out his wallet and handed his worth of coffee to him. "It was on the house! I can't take it!" The owner refused to take.

"Just take it, or else I will shout and abuse you for giving me foul coffee!" Mikkel smiled at him and left off. The owner looked at Mikkel for a while and then smiled back saying, "See you soon Brother!" Mikkel carried on to the route where he saw similar shop owners outside their shops advertising to visitors. His feet stopped near an entrance to what it seemed to be as a national park written on the sideboard. But Mikkel was fascinated by the marble statue erected just outside, in between the entrance to the park. The statue of a man standing a tall folding his arms in. Without a second thought, Mikkel took out the diary and drew an abstract sketch of it. He didn't know whom the statue was of. He seemed like drawing and he did. There, down the statue, there was a description of the statue, and to his knowledge, it was of Sir George Munroe from the bourbon period. One of the greatest sculptors of his time. Mikkel kept moving until he reached the road's end by a barricade. He could see the long and large building in front of him. Through the side, he could easily see the brick-colored walls of the museum with several white pillars at the front. At the symmetric center of the building stood a large tent-like structure peeking out of the building. At the top was a large clock, below which was the emblem of the Naples National Archaeological Museum. Mikkel stood there and drew another sketch and this time of the museum. After that, after an organized escorting, he was in the museum. As he entered, he was welcomed at the reception by one of the staff. There was a long line in front of him. "Good morning, tickets please!" A soft voice came out from the front. Mikkel saw a lady was collecting tickets from everyone entering. Ahead of him was a group of school students along with 2 teachers on a historical trip to the museum. Mikkel could see a few of them flying off from the line and peeking out at the front to see the length of the line. After a thorough check and collection of tickets, were they only allowed to enter the museum. Next came Mikkel's turn and to his surprise, he was the last person to get in.

"Good Morning, Ticket, please! Excuse me. Don't I recognize you?" The lady collecting the ticket asked Mikkel in her soft voice. "Erm., no sorry. You must have me mistaken with someone else." Mikkel hesitated. "I am not from around here."

"I am sure I have seen your face before, you look so familiar. Do you have family here?" The lady asked. "I did. My - *father* - Federico lived here. He used to work here at this museum." Mikkel boldly said. "Did? And they are not here anymore? Maybe I knew them!" The white-suited lady asked. "He was an Archaeologist at the museum and he lived here when he still was alive!"

With clapping of her hands, she rejoiced and said, "I knew it! Federico...I can see the resemblance now. I am sorry to hear about his passing." Her voice lowered. "I don't look like him!" Mikkel grinds his teeth. "Oh, you sure do. Take a few years off. It's the eyes I think." The lady was mourning herself on Mikkel's father's thought. "Um..., I am here to see the museum. May I?" Mikkel abruptly spoke, disturbing her thoughts. "Wow, now you even sound like him." The lady said under her breath. "Maybe that's not the best attribute to have in the world!"

"Please mam, I would like to have a ticket to the museum." Mikkel requested with a bit soft voice. "Please take the ticket, sir. It's the least I can do after your father has done so much for the museum."

"Finally, thank you!"

"Now enjoy everything Naples has to offer." She said.

In the Museum, the surface was very bright as if everything was milky white. From the walls to the stairs, even the pillars too. There were visitors everywhere. Some clicking photos with the statues posing in every way possible. Some looking at an artifact as if they discovered it. Even some were just busy looking for others who were admiring the place. At one corner of the ground floor, a pianist was playing for the assembly those were listening to his music. Some of the people on the museum were just strolling around to see if there's anything cool while others were in their photo-shoot mode. At the other corner of the ground floor, there was an open garden with no roof with a water fountain in it. Mikkel could see how students who came on a school trip were excited and enjoying the fountain piece. The teachers sitting there on the benches and students looking around everywhere in the museum.

"Isn't it great!" A man sitting on the bench right next to Mikkel said. "Pardon me!"

"I said, isn't it great that students here are playing and looking around so much. So much about the history of this City. This ancient city. Then why are they so like this?" The man answered back to Mikkel turning slowly at him. "Umm...yeah, visitors here should take things here for serious. You are right." Mikkel answered. "When someone middle-aged man like me says anything, that doesn't mean that it's always wise enough to nod your head." The man smiled and said. Mikkel was surprised. "Can I help you with anything, young man." He asked. "Oh, this place is enormous. It could take me a while getting around."

"The world is limited only by your limitless mind. Break free and look the surround, you will see what you want. But still, if you are lost. There is a board over there at the corner. So, if you want guidance..." The man spoke pointing at the corner of the garden Room.

"Thanks..." Mikkel looked at the board and marched forward across the garden.

"By the way, what are you looking for?"

Mikkel turned around and answered, "I am looking for the Ancient Egyptian exhibits."

"Sure. At the center of the main hall is some stairs. On the first, and from there take right."

"Thanks...." Mikkel said awkwardly beaming his eyes on him who was still seating on the bench rarely moved an inch from his place. And Mikkel walked away from towards the hall stairs. He could hear to the other archaeologist there who was acting as a guide to those who were interested in knowing more about the artifacts. He passed the Great hall and reached the stairs and took right.

As he entered the floor, the color around smoothly changed but still noticeable. The white marble color had now changed to reddish pink with a yellowish-green attribute, giving it a feel of ancient Egypt already. Mikkel took a deep breath and start moving forward. There also he could see the same sorts of people, the photo-person, the no-carer, the self-archaeologist, and others. But he could also see a few who even on wheelchairs came to see the exhibition. The statues standing against the walls and the picture frames there were telling the stories of the past. The lifestyle, the battles, the destruction, the love, the heroic...everything was stored in those statues and the colors used in the paintings. Mikkel felt a sudden heaviness in the air as he entered the floor. While he was interacting, he saw another room titled Collezione egizia! He entered the room.



Unlike outside, the room was a bit smaller and very less crowded. There stored very precious artifacts, the ones that were stored and preserved under observation. He went more deeply into the room which led him to the other and to his amaze, he stopped by one such small bronze statue kept under the observation of light on the podium. Mikkel took out his diary and sketched out the statue. In there he also saw a petrified body inside a glass box. He didn't felt safe in there being alone, since there were less than 2 people, he hurried back out and struck by chance to another black stone statue. He turned around to see. He started feeling anxious and nauseous. The air around there was a bit heavy in a certain manner, that's what Mikkel felt. Since the rest of the visitors were fine. Mikkel could feel the heaviness in his every breath he takes. He slowly circled the statue to see the face and gazed at it in one straight face as if the statue hypnotized him. The time around the statue slowed down and Mikkel could hear the tic-toc sound of the time clock. He just kept looking at the statue and to others, it was like he was not even around. Mikkel was slowly deep sinking in the era, the Egyptian era on the statue's make! The era when the statue was made!

## **EGYPT**

**1197 BC**

### **An afternoon in the nineteenth dynasty**

It was an era long after the Egyptian pyramids were made, stood tall and bold in the vast arid regions of Egypt. The dry wind blowing taking away sand and dust from the top layer of the land. The sunny sky shining brightly. It was so hot that neither the sand crawlers were ready to burn up their skeleton. They too like people then used to wait until the scorching blaze lowers and they could get out of their huts.

In one of the civilization groups near an Oasis, there was a young dark-colored man in his early 20s. He was wearing those white sleeveless peplos with his hairs up till the neck level. He also wore a brown band across his head probably to manage his hair. He was standing in his one-floored mud hut's balcony. Leaning against the railing made of mud and woods. He was enjoying the view of the great pyramids of Egypt. One could easily see them. The wind whistling through his ears and flying his long black hair. He stood in, turned around and went inside the room, out from the heat waves he could feel that neither his cloth-covered ceiling of the balcony supported by wooden beams couldn't protect him.

He went inside, in the living room, sat on the table and took a sip of remaining grape wine from his glass, and took a breathed out. His hut seemed as if he was a sculptor, one could see a variety of sculpting tools of different sizes and shapes and several of the sculpture kept on one side of the floor. Some of them were unfinished. The hut was perfectly lit by the natural daylights and big vases kept at the corner for storing grains and fodder. Water kept in the earthen pots. Everything there looked earthen and were earthenwares. The landscape was sandy yellow everywhere and only colorful stood were the colorful clothes. He waited till the evening and then he stepped out of his home. People like him were slowly getting out of their houses and the crowd was slowly building at the front. There were mud houses lined up straight in the series, one after the other and slowly people are coming out to walk, children are coming out to play and women to talk! Every house looked the same but differ only in decorations. All houses same as a rectangular-shaped building made of mud, stood one floor tall with stairs either inside or outside the house to

go up the terrace, small terrace where women usually go around to dry their clothes. The sculptor started walking down the dusty street, where he could see a broken cart kept aside of the street, a bunch of date palm trees, shops of camel rent, the collection of earthen vases, and many more. He kept moving as if he was looking for something. Near a circle, he stopped by to see a sculpture of a deity. He was a deep believer in God and suddenly an inspiration clicked in his mind. He ran back to his house. On his way back home, he could see an image of him taking his chisels and hammer to sculpt the god out of a stone and he will be blessed by his deity and will be rewarded for his actions in the *fields of Aaru...*

He did the same, he picked up his chisel and hammer and in no time crafted his god out of an ordinary black stone kept on his balcony. He had been thinking this for long and now he finally did it. When his sculpture got complete, he finally relived and gazed at it in one straight face and he kept looking as if he was hypnotized by the statue. After a while, he put down his tools and nodded his head in relief and joy. For him, it was a sense of great satisfaction and peace of mind. He finally got a good omen to do the rightful. The sculpture brought more clarity than ever to him than anything other ever could have brought him. He was the messenger of God.....

The time clock rewinds, the time winds back to where Mikkel was gazing at the black statue of God. It's been a long time since Mikkel had an impact of something on him. He looked at his wristwatch and was heading way back to his apartment. While on the way, his whole focus was on the statue and what he just felt being so close to that. He was confused and could not draw anything out of what he had just gone through. The Egyptian era, the sculpture, the god figure, everything seems lunatic to him. He was passing cars, people, roads, and all this time his mind kept captivating what he saw.

"Was it a dream? No...no...no. Some kind of vision!" Mikkel kept thinking in his mind.

Down at the alley near the road, he stopped by to see a poster on the light post pillar. He looked at it and then suddenly started running for the apartment.

At the residence, he picked up the drawing board, color palette, and started painting hurriedly. After a while, he stopped, looked at it, and nodded his head in joy and pleasure. The feel of pleasure on his face could be seen easily. He took a deep breath and there was a beautiful painting of the same Egyptian sculptor sculpting the god! It was very beautiful. The painting reduced his head load but still, he was into his great thought of statue vision which he saw at the museum and the feeling he felt near that Egyptian god figure. With this thought in mind the day went by and Mikkel missed the chance of watching the sunset!

"Sir, if you are here. Please have the pleasure of watching the sunset." Mikkel remembered what that coffee owner when he was talking to him in the morning.

Mikkel missed it today and thought he will see it tomorrow. And he went to sleep.

The next day, Mikkel woke up with a sugar-free tea and sat in the chair surfing through the net to see anything similar to what he experienced yesterday. There were not very solid answers to what he was looking for. After scrolling through the feeds of 'What is the hidden meaning to visions.', 'Is time travel possible?', 'Museum is a time machine.', 'Mystery of Teleportation and it's real-life incidents (with proof)'. He finally got something

he could deduce things of. An article by Antonio Guzzave and .....*Federico Montana*! He was surprised by the sightings of his father's name in an article. He opens it and the article talked about some kind of discovery, a breakthrough in the field of Archaeology and time. But the content was not understood by Mikkel cause of too many Archaeological terms and not so easy to understand language. The article was in the local language (Neapolitan), which he didn't know. But he knows someone who could help him.

He went downstairs and straight to the counter where he saw that same fat and a fair lady in her white nightgown.

"Mrs. André, hi. How are you?"

"Very nice, Mikkel. And you."

"I am good. Umm... Mrs. André, do you know how to read Neapolitan?"

"What? You are asking a lady if she knows her mother tongue. Are you ok, son?"

"Very well. I need your help. Could you translate this article for me and tell me what is written on this." Mikkel fronted his phone showing her the article.

"Yes. Of course. I will translate it for you."

And she translated the whole article line by line to Mikkel. But to his amaze, he was more confused. And above that was Mrs. André who was fused by what she just did. Reading out 30 pages of an article and translating it line by line was a heck of a work. And above that, most of the things went right over her brain cells and didn't know what she was translating. She shouted Moho and called him for strong ginger tea to relax her.

"Thank you, Mrs. André." Mikkel went back to his room and he was still confused, he knew what the article told but he was not yet convinced. "How could this possibly be true. This isn't a fairy tale. How this could happen?" He was instigated by the article and thought of knowing the truth, by asking himself from the authors! The one he knew was dead and the other, he was hoping to be alive.

He searched through the internet to know about the author Antonio Guzzave. As he googled the name, the first thing popped up was his profile and he was surprised to know that he was the same man whom he talked to in the museum and asked for the way! Mikkel now has many questions to ask and he was in his damn serious look... He took his diary, wallet, and goggles and headed again for the Museum.

## Chapter 4

"Mikkel, wait!" A soft motherly voice stopped him. He turned around to see it was Mrs. André standing at the restaurant door. "Yes, Mrs. André!"

"I...I forgot to ask you something."

"What?" Mikkel asked.

"How did you enjoy the museum?" Mrs. André asked.

Mikkel at this point had a lot of things in his mind. But yet he smiled back and answered affirmatively. "It certainly was more impressive than I thought it was going to be."

"What were you expecting? It was an Archaeological Museum, after all."

"Ah...very true. The whole building was impressive." Mikkel sniggered, but in his mind, something else was going through. "I suppose I just didn't realize what my father was involved in."

"It is amazing, just having the museum so close. You should make the most out of it." She smiled.

"I intended to." He smiled back. "Mrs. André. I am dying to talk and discuss with you, but right now I am in a bit hurry. Could we talk later on? I want to go back to the museum." Mikkel said.

"Oh...Ok...Ok." She felt embarrassing. Mikkel was about to leave when she stopped him again. "Let me make up your time. Here have this. Take my *Vespa*..." She handed over a key (*scooty*) to him and showed him her *Vespa*.

It was an orange-colored *scooty* ideal for narrow passage, with a daisy flower pinched at the back of the scooter. "Are you serious?" Mikkel asked. "Please take it. Or else I will feel guilty. Please..." Mikkel could not waste more time. He accepted the key, sat in, wore the helmet, and drove through the street in no time. The speed was incredible and so was Mikkel's driving skills. He could easily surmount the traffic, taking shortcuts, and reached the museum in no time. If he would be in the taxi, it would probably take another half an hour to reach here. Mikkel thought. He parked the *Vespa* and headed for the museum.

"Hello, friend! Glad to see you again." A familiar voice came in from the crowd. It was the coffee shop owner. He was waving his hands up high towards Mikkel in greeting. Mikkel passed him saying, "Sorry my friend. I am a bit busy right now. I will talk to you in the evening. Sorry again friend." Before the owner could say any other word, Mikkel disappeared in the crowd. "I just wanted to have a chat and ask how was the museum to you!" But Mikkel was gone by that time. The owner felt very bad, he liked chatting with him. But now Mikkel had just left him to say no time for him to have a chat with him. He became sad and with his board, in his hands, he just saw people passing across while he was standing looking at the crowd for Mikkel's sight.

Mikkel got into the museum and he was at the counter door to receive his ticket. "Well, who do we have here. How was your day yesterday?" It was the same white suit lady at the counter. "Good morning. It was great thank you."

"And you are heading back to the museum again today?" Must have made an impact. Hmm.."

"I don't know if impact is the right word." Mikkel excused her.

"So you haven't made up your mind about your father yet!" The lady asked. Mikkel avoiding eye contact. "Not yet!"

"Maybe another day exploring the museum's secret is exactly what you need then," Lady said. "That's the plan. If you let me in, then." Mikkel annoyingly said.

"Good luck and have fun!"

Mikkel found himself again in the Great hall whereas usual visitors are walking in and out of the halls, gallery, rooms. The same pianist playing the music but this time with his violinist friends. He rushed in the garden hall to find that man. It was the same place where he first saw him. That man was sitting right on the bench where he was sitting yesterday. Same as usual, watching the school kids.

"Mikkel, welcome back. How was your day of exploring the museum yesterday?" The man asked without looking at him. As if he knew that Mikkel would be there looking for him.

"How do you know that...that my name is..?? Wait. You knew me already." Mikkel was surprised. The man laughed. "Ha..ha..ha..ha..ha." The man looked at his wrist. "I estimated you would be arriving here 10 minutes early. Non the less, now you are here." He said looking at him. "You are Antonio Guzzave??"

"Who do you think I am? Didn't you saw my profile on the internet?"

"You worked with Federico?? You knew him?" Antonio stood up and walked toward Mikkel who was standing behind the bench. He buttoned the two upper buttons of his suit.

"Yes, Mikkel. I know him and I know you too. But you didn't answer my question? How was your yesterday at the museum?" "Wait. That's why I was here for. I have read the article written by you and Federico!"

"Aha...*the Particle Memory Theory*!!" "Yes.yes.yes. That Particle Theory...."

"How was your yesterday?"

"It was incredible. It was more than I thought."

"Your father would be glad to hear that. If he would be here."

"I wasn't expecting to get so emotional about it all."

"Hmm... surely you don't. But your father...your father, he was a good man. Because of your father, I am here. This museum, you know, owes a great contribution to him. He has done a lot for this museum." Mikkel looked at him. "I have heard a lot, sir."

"Antonio! Call me Antonio."

"What do you know about him?"

"Your father, he was my friend also. He was a great friend but also he was a great father. I can tell you that he was a man that any son would be proud to call his father." There was a pause. Antonio started walking out of the garden. "Are you coming?" Mikkel looked at him at amaze and started following him.

They came out of the garden into the Great hall, Mikkel walking side by side to Antonio. "You see these. The parts of the Roman empire, the farnazy collection filling the grand hall with statues excavated from the baths of Caracalla in Rome." They past through the main hall looking at the statues in two queues along both sides. "These white statues are the souvenir of that era. Come on. Come with me." They entered another room climbing the stairs turning left on the first floor. "The collection ranges from grand statuary mad exquisite mosaics to the most intimate details of everyday Roman life."

"Yeah, I understand all these, but why are you telling me all these?" Mikkel asked. Antonio turned back at him and smiled. "Come with me."

"These bronze statue of Pompeii." They entered into another room. "Resting hernias with its tired little leg." They saw a black statue there. "Drunken fawn singing and clapping his fingers on beat, is living his life." There was another statue lying on one side of the room. Mikkel followed him into another room. "You see this, and these..., the hanging mosaics, depicting ancient life. Come here. See this." He asks Mikkel to come close to one such mosaic. "What can you feel? Can you feel the joy, the happiness in the air." Antonio turned to the mosaic. "Look at this mosaic. Mosaics of theatre with people dressing, artists preparing for the role, and the iconic masks that still symbolizes comedy and tragedy today. Look at it and feel the air around it." Mikkel could feel a sense of joy around being in front of the mosaic. "Come here. Take a look at this. What do you feel?"

"I hear some...thing! Like a whistle or music..."

"Exactly. This mosaic depicts exactly that. The mosaic showing intricate details of street musicians!"

"And what about this?" Mikkel moved into another room and sees a big painting inside in front of the wall. "Is this Alexander??" Mikkel asked and Antonio smiled. "You see, Alexander was everywhere and you will find his traces in the whole of Greece." They looked at the picture. "This is a big painting of war between Alexander and the Persians."

"Come here. Follow me. I want to show you something." They moved back to the one end of the Great hall. As they entered, they saw one large piece of carved rock. It was sculpted so beautifully that one could see the intricate details of it. They stood just in front of it. "Now feel this!" Mikkel started looking at it. "This is the largest intact statue from antiquity said to be carved from one single piece of marble. The Toro Farnazy features a tangled group with a woman being tied to a bull." Mikkel took out his diary and drew the whole statue in it. "The legend says. Once upon an ancient Greek time, that woman Terechê seduced the king who abandoned his pregnant queen. The abandoned queen gave birth to twin boys who grew up and after killing their deadbeat dad, they tied their dear jade to the horns of a bull to be bashed against the mountains. The action is masterfully crafted as hoofs flail, capes fly, and the dog's snarl."

The two walked away back towards the central hall. "What does this all mean?" Mikkel asked. "Still not cleared! I thought it was enough...well well well, will you do one thing for me? For that, I will explain to you why? Deal."

"Deal!"

"Go to the Pompeii sections of the museum to the first right up the stairs and look for the painting in the brownish-red frame depicting a family painting with a man, his wife, and his little daughter."

Without a single word, he rushed for the stairs and into the Pompeii collection room. There was a different vibe around there. The atmosphere seemed heavy to him. As if the air was carrying the burden of something really big. His chest was pressing in against his lungs. His steps shortened and the yellowish-red room was blooming with yellow lights on the walls and the statue. The whole room was filled in with original frames depicting the life of the people of Pompeii. Mikkel went into another room and followed by another room when he finally came across the painting which Antonio was talking about. He reached closer to the painting. The time was slowing down. It seemed as if the time was mourning. Mikkel kept looking at it without blinking his eyes. The time slowed down.

Suddenly Mikkell's eyes filled with tears, his brown eyes filled with water, and trying to escape from his eyes. The tears made its way down his cheeks. Mikkell's tears were falling drop by drop on the floor. After a while, the time was getting back to normal and he was gaining consciousness.

He came back to Antonio Guzzave, who was in his office at the end of the garden floor.

"May I come in, Antonio!"

"Yes, surely..." Antonio looked at Mikkell whose face was deeply sunken down. He could see the track of tear across his cheeks.

"I think you now know, why!" Antonio said. Mikkell looks up. "Why? Why me? Why do I only see it? Does this have to do with me? Why it is affecting me so much? Am I....weak?"

"No...no.no.no Mikkell. It has nothing to do with your weakness. What you felt yesterday and today, it could happen to anyone. It's just that you have experienced something that nobody else did."

"What is that?"

"Death. Death of your loved ones! Your father loved you and you loved him." Mikkell did not say anything. "The ones whom you loved from your heart," Antonio asked him to sit down on the chair in front of him and gave him a glass of water. "Here. Drink." They both sat down at his office. Mikkell took a sip of water and said. "So, the Particle has Memory. It stores memory from the pasts."

"Precisely. The Particle Memory Theory states that the particles/Matters can store data. You can call whatever you want, energy, magic, information, anything! And in our case, it's a memory from the pasts. The particles of which things are made of, the air that travels around containing information. Everything in this world is still here, intact. The history is not past." Mikkell took another sip of water. "Ever wonder, in space how could the gravitational waves tell us about the starting of this universe. Why do scientists ponder upon things like, it could unravel the mysteries of the universe and could tell a lot about the origin of the universe? How?"

"Because the gravitational waves carry the information around. The waves store the data. It contains information about the past!"

"Exactly. It's just that how you can extract the information out of gravitational waves. Similarly, the artifacts around stores information of its origin. The era in which it was made. It stores all of it. That's what you felt there in those rooms. The heaviness in the air around. The feeling of being in the state of the era. Seeing through the era and having some sort of vision around you, which you see. This is the Particle Memory Theory!!"

"This could change the way we see our history. But then why this doesn't happen with everything?" Mikkell asked. "Because every material is not the same. And it doesn't store data the same way and it is also affected by the depth of information. That's why you feel less in front of something and more in front of something."

"All this...all this..." Mikkell took a deep breath. "And it was all your father's thought. He was the first one to discover this. Initially, I was like you, but he compelled me to believe in him. He shared his discovery with me, even though it was his discovery, his whole discovery. But he shared his discovery with me." Antonio stood up from his chair and walked towards Mikkell. He put his hand on his shoulder and said, "I don't know, how well of a father he was, but I surely know that he was a wise and great man, and he will not do anything without a reason."

Mikkel stood up and walked away. "What reason could be as good as leaving his son alone?"

"I don't know, son. But he sure does have a reason for his doings." Antonio turned to Mikkel. "I remember and I have seen him. He used to talk about your family, he used to talk about you... He loved you and he cared for you. He had a photo of yours and used to keep with him every time. He even cried for his doings watching your photo." Mikkel doesn't know what to say. "He would be proud of you, Mikkel."

"I wish I could say that too," Mikkel said. "Thank you...thank you for everything, sir." Mikkel's eyes were trembling. He avoided eye contact and left the place. Antonio didn't say anything but watched him going away. Mikkel left in pace.

Mikkel was completely heartbroken and his eyes were trembling with water. He ran out and paced towards the scooter, *Vespa*. But he stopped by near the coffee shop. Mikkel thought of meeting him but then he thought of meeting him tomorrow. He cannot meet him like this. He was leaving the place when Mikkel encountered him.

It was late evening and they both were sitting in the shop drinking coffee. Mikkel was hesitant to tell him everything. The owner understood everything. The owner asked, "Is there anything you want to talk about? You see talking makes things easy to go." Mikkel looked down at his coffee. "No, I am fine. And sorry for today's." The owner didn't respond. He said, "I am an immigrant. I am from San Diego, California. My grandfather was bought here and since then we are the resident of Naples." "Why? Why he came?"

"I don't know, neither my dad knew. My grandfather never told him but since then he was doing business of coffee here and I am the second generation of this business."

"Your dad, how was he? I mean, was he...?"

"My father died when I was 15 and a load of my whole family suddenly trembled upon me. It was all thanks to my uncle, my mother's brother. He helped me set the coffee shop again and I am now expanding it." The owner took a sip of coffee. "I didn't spend a lot of time with him but whatever I have spent with him, it was worth living. The memories are made and I am living with it. He was a great man. He loved me and my mom a lot. Whatever he did. It was for us, even after he died, we feel...I feel like he is still with us, looking after us." The owner looked at the sky indicating towards the early stars.

After this Mikkel told everything to him. His museum experience and why he was here.

"Hmm..., your father and others must have worked hard on all those exhibits."

"I know. It is just hard in my situation to appreciate everything. I feel like I don't even know my father. I am hearing about another version of him. I don't know."

"What will you do know?" The owner asked. "I don't know, man. Tomorrow I am going to visit Pompeii. I want to see things with my own eyes."

"Nice."

"I want to use your washroom," Mikkel said. "Yeah sure. Go straight and take first left."

"Thanks. I will just come." Mikkel went for the washroom and leaving behind his cell phone on the table. After a while, Mikkel came back. "Ok friend, I think I should take a leave," Mikkel said coming back to the table where he saw, the owner was still seating on the table opposite him. "Ok. See you soon. And thanks for sharing."

"Oh, it's fine." Mikkel was leaving his shop when the owner came from back running.

"Friend, your phone!" Mikkel turned around. "Thank you, my friend. Mikkel took back his phone and was about to leave when he was stopped by the owner. "Friend!" Mikkel again



turned to him. "We haven't even hugged!" The owner said. "*Aree!*" And they embraced each other and Mikkel went back to his residence.

The next day, Mikkel woke up, find himself on his bed. His head was aching. He could barely move his legs and hands. He was feeling weak. "Oh, god...Aaargh.." he screamed and got into his feet from the bed. "My head!" Mikkel stood up and went straight to the toilet and spit out everything he just had last night. He was feeling dizzy and he rested for a while. After an hour or so he woke up. He was now feeling much better. "Food...! It surely has something to do with the food." He went to the bathroom and looked into the mirror. He could see his hair covering his eyes. Inch little hair was also growing all over his face. He rinsed his face, took a bath, had a tea, and was ready for Pompeii. He scratched his wallet to check on his wallet balance. "Good..." His eyes stuck on to a card, Mikkel took out the card and it was the card of the same driver who dropped him from the airport. Mikkel thought something and dialed the number.

"Hello, am I speaking to....*Mr...Teeerrraaand.....Acceeeento....?*" Mikkel finding it difficult to pronounce the name.

"YES, WHO IS THIS?" a voice from the other side of the phone came in.

"Hello..um..hi, you remember that guy, whom you picked up at the airport 2 days ago. The Indian guy."

"OH. YES...YES... ARE YOU...?"

"Yes, I am calling. Listen, I needed a trip."

"YES-YES. TELL ME. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO. AND I WILL TAKE YOU THERE. YOU NAME IT AND WE WILL BE THERE IN NO TIME."

"That's so nice."

"OK, SO WHERE TO? Market city, mercato. Spanish quarters, quarteri spagnoli. Mt. Vesuvius, vesuvio. Sorrento and marina del cantone. Seafront, lungomare. You NAME IT."

"Pompeii!!"

"POMPEII?? OKAY... TELL ME YOUR ADDRESS AND I WILL BE THERE IN NO TIME TO PICK YOU UP."

"Right... note the address..."

Mikkel got ready and was waiting outside on the streets when a blue-colored taxi came in and stopped right beside Mikkel. "HELLO, SIR...!! HOOP IN." Without any further questions and answers Mikkel hopped in the car and another second they were off for Pompeii. "SIR? MAY I ASK ONE QUESTION?" Mikkel looked at him. "PEOPLE GENERALLY COME HERE TO HAVE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PIZZAS. DO SHOPPING. HAVE PHOTOS IN MARKET PLACE. THEY LOOK FOR LIFE AND FESTIVALS. BUT YOU...YOU ARE GOING TO A PLACE WHERE LIFE IS NO MORE. IT'S RUIN. WHY?"

"Because I am crazy. I am not a tourist here. I am here to complete the unfinished." Mikkel looked outside. He could see the landscape changing from city buildings to grassy lands, they were close to the outskirts of Naples. "SIR, ARE YOU AN ARCHAEOLOGIST OR SOMETHING?"

"My fa..." Mikkel paused. "One of my relatives was." Mikkel took out his diary and started writing something on it. "SO YOU ARE A WRITER OR AN ARTIST?" Mikkel closed his diary and looked at the driver who was looking at him through the rearview mirror. "NO. Could you just drive?"

"SORRY SIR!!" The driver turned straight ahead and the roads were getting wider and cleaner. They were now on the outskirts of Naples. Mikkel through the car window could see the green grass dancing in the windy and cloudy weather. "IT SEEMS LIKE IT WILL BE RAINING TODAY. WHAT DO YOU THINK SIR?" Mikkel right now was thinking of making a mistake, calling him for the trip. He was so talkative. "I think you should drive faster."

After a couple of minutes of the drive, things didn't change. Mikkel was fed up answering him. Mikkel had timed it by now, every 2 minutes, the driver would ask a question or try to talk with him. Every time he does, Mikkel would pretend to nod his words and agreeing to every word that he says. Mikkel thought it was a bad decision to take a cab. He could instead take a train and without any traffic and a driver, he would be in the ruins of Pompeii in less than 20 minutes. After an aged-long 30 minutes of driving, Mikkel was finally there, at the entrance of the ruins of Pompeii. "THERE YOU GO, SIR. TO YOUR RIGHT IS THE ENTRANCE OF POMPEII."

"Thanks..." Mikkel got off from the car, paid the driver, and shot off before the driver could yell at him to call him again when he will be leaving the ruins. Mikkel ignored him and shoot straight at the entrance.

The Porta Marina, standing tall was a board written. After walking a few steps, he came across the entrance gate where he could see a 200 ft long queue of people, waiting for their turn into the ruins.

After waiting for the next 15 minutes, Mikkel finally got in through. The first sight he got of the ruins, he was left stranded in his place. Having a direction map of Pompeii in one hand and a bottle of water in another. He was baffled by the sight. The winds were still blowing peacefully but the dark clouded sky overhead was indicative that the weather was changing. Straight at the horizon, he could see the gigantic Mt. Vesuvius...

"Isn't it great?" A man came in and said. "S...sorry."

"The mountain..., the ruins... Oh, sorry, where are my manners!! My name is Andrew...Andrew Louder, I am an Archaeologist here. I saw you gazing so interestingly. I thought you wanted some help around."

"So, are you a tour guide too?"

"Sometimes, but don't worry. I don't charge for this. It's my interest to show people what they are looking for?" Andrew looked at Mikkel while saying.

"What?" Mikkel looked at him. "So, want to dig in or you will just stand here and look," Andrew said. "Why me? there are lots of people." Mikkel asked. "Argh... questions! You ask too many questions, but this is not the right time or place to ask." Andrew started moving. "Let's go. Your answers await... Mikkel!!!"

# Chapter 5

Mikkel chased him down the stairs to the main square.

"Wait, how do you know my name? I did not tell you my name!" Mikkel looked at him with suspicion. Andrew turned to him. "Fine..." Andrew gasped at him and said, "Do you know Antonio Guzzave?"

"Yes!!" Mikkel became more suspicious.

"He told me that you would come. So, I am here for you to let you be able to understand stuff here." Andrew said. Mikkel rolled his tongue with a closed mouth. "Fine, but how did he know that I will be coming to Pompeii, cause I never told him," Mikkel said.

"True. He *thought* you would come. And I just needed to identify you, which I guess was not too hard for me." Andrew looked back at him smiling. "So... let's go."

Mikkel followed Andrew step by step and waiting for him to say something. He kept looking at him suspiciously. "We are just walking?" Mikkel said. "We are not there yet. Wait."

They were passing across the stone roads with broken white pillars on both sides of the way. The intricate and detailed engravings on the pillars were amazing. The winds were clapping strong and the green grasses, all over the fields, were dancing at their beats. The ruins could be seen clearly. The broken walls, the broken pillars, houses devastated, everything. In good Roman style, the city was well-organized, with a grid street plan contained within its walls. Remains of homes give a glimpse into Roman lifestyles. Mikkel could feel the seconds lengthening. The air around was blowing so strong that one could feel the horror of that day.

As they crossed the restricted area signboard, Andrew started. "Now we are in the right place." Mikkel was still suspicious about what was happening. "We just crossed the restricted signboard?"

"Yeah, that's right. Now, you can see by yourself!" Andrew lengthening his arms sideways showing him the area. He started walking towards the stone alley and Mikkel followed him.

"Life of Pompeii was stopped in its tracks. Today, excavations of this nice booming city offer the best look anywhere in Roman life. Pompeii was an important port town. It was big - 20,000 people!" Andrew turned to see the expression on Mikkel's face. "It was an important commercial center." They entered into a vast square patch of land. It has a stone floor and pillars surrounding the whole area. "Imagine this square busy with market activity and because it was a port, it was a kind of a sailor's quarter, and..." Andrew again turned to see the expression on Mikkel's face who was now looking here and there exploring things. "...and then it means a lot of bars, baths, brothels, restaurants, and places of entertainment. It was one of the famous cities of the Roman era and rich used to come around to have a vacation here. The main square, or the forum, was Pompeii's commercial, religious, and political center."

"Why are you telling me all this?" Mikkel looked frustrated by his commentary. "I know all this!"

"Then why did you came here?" Andrew smiled back.

"To...to see and feel it with my own eyes. To feel the destruction of that day." Mikkel added. "Now, you being poetic here. If you want I can leave you here with your *"feel"*," Andrew said. "That would be great. Thanks." Andrew walked away quietly without turning around but smiling. He did his job. A job to get Mikkel to the place!

Now Mikkel was all alone at the ruins and thunder was clapping at the distance. The winds were on its full mood that day. He walked a few steps forward where he could see a series of houses...remains of houses. It looked familiar to him, the Roman houses. His every step towards the houses and he could hear the time ticking. He entered into one of the houses. He was standing for what looked like the main hall. The room had enough of the light to see the burn marks around on the walls and the floor. The clock was ticking and the time slowed down. He could see the room dissolving. Mikkel had a sensation that he was flying very fast, backward. The blur of colors and shapes rushed past him, his ears were pounding and then he felt the solid floor.

**POMPEII**  
**79 AD**  
**THE DAY OF ERUPTION**

It was dark orange, the sky. Children were playing out and suddenly the whole earth tremors. People around thought it was a small earthquake. After a few hours, the Mt. Vesuvius was spewing grey smoke out of its vent. People on the streets have never experienced such an event before. The smoke was getting darker and darker. After a few hours, rain of black soot particles was drizzling. Children on the streets could catch them, directly falling on their hands. The earth shook again, but this time it was larger. The smoke was becoming dense and denser and was glowing orange in the light of sunset.

Lucius came running in his house. A man wearing white peplos(half). He was a middle-aged man with brown hair and beard. He entered panicking, "Mt. Vesuvius... it's... it's going to erupt!" He was gasping. "What?" His wife said. "And we are trapped!"

"What are you saying?" His wife, Aurelia, sitting in her hall suddenly stood up. "What are you saying?" He grasped her hand and forced her to see through the balcony. "Look around. See...the wrath of gods. Aurelia could see the Mountain spewing hot gas and smoke out of its vent. The people running around with their families to save their life. There were chaos everywhere. She hurriedly stepped back in. "You are right. We have to leave."

"But we are trapped! All the boats have now gone. The rich and the landlords took it. We are left here, trapped!" Lucius stated. "But we must get out. There has to be away." Aurelia said. "I don't see anyway, Aurelia." Lucius was sinking in his thoughts and he sat there on the floor. "Wait, there is away." His head suddenly rose high and he stood up. "There's a boat on the other side of the port which is taking people out, but the price is too costly." He again pulls his head down. "And we don't have money!"

"We must get the money then Lucius..., please. We need you right now." He felt like he had failed himself, he is not a good father, not a good husband. He doesn't know what to do? Lucius's daughter, Maxima, came in from the bedroom, pinching her eyes, she said,

"Are we going somewhere, *Papa?* I can hear so much noise around coming from down." She grabbed Lucius's hand. Lucius bend over and said, "We are going to leave this place. We will be going to another place, a place where there will be lots of toys for you to play, lots of food to eat. And unlike here, you will have lots of friends."

"Truly..." His daughter asked excitedly. Lucius nodded in agreement. He stood up and his eyes were puddling with tears. In a second he sipped the tears off his face. "Lucius, I saw Terentius Neo and his wife leaving a while ago!" Lucius turned to Aurelia. "Yeah?"

"There's no way they could have taken all their money with them." Lucius's eyes shimmered brightly. "I know where he could hide his money!"

"Maybe we have a chance then!" Aurelia said. "I should go now before anybody else gets the same idea. You just saved us." Lucius thanked Aurelia and set off. Before going, he embraced her daughter Maxima and took off.

Mikkel was seeing all this. He could see all the happenings of the day. He could feel the pain of the family. An innocent daughter, a helpful wife, and a man trying to save his family. Mikkel was sobbing, he looked around, he sees all dark patches of burn around the rooms, the broken balcony. Like Lucius, he also set off from the house.

Lucius was running against the crowd. The black ashes all over the streets, the panicking crowd running to save their life. Lucius was struggling to get past through the crowd. At the horizon, he could see the time bomb ticking fast. The ashes were spewing everywhere. Mt. Vesuvius was slowly engulfing the city. The houses were covered with ashes. Once colorful houses now were just abandoned black ruins.

Mikkel could see the same scenes, but the props were changed. The once colored building was now looked nothing but the ruins of houses. All broken and abandoned. He started walking with the feet of Lucius.

Lucius entered one of the richest merchants of the city, Terentius Neo. That wealthy merchant house shows the typical layout of a mansion. It's a colonnaded atrium, with formal garden and water flowing to give freshness, was ringed by colorfully frescoed rooms. But now for Mikkel, it was nothing but an abandoned black remains of the house.

Lucius entered through the hallway straight up through the stairs, into the room which for Mikkel looked like once it was a bedroom.

As Lucius entered through the door, he saw an old man with white hairs and white beard looking for something behind the drawers of the rack at one side of the room.

"Cornelius?? Is that you?" Lucius knew the old man. He was surprised to see Cornelius there, in that state. Cornelius's state was pathetic. His tattered clothes, shaggy hair.

"Lucius?" Cornelius asked. "What are you doing here?" Lucius asked.

"I was looking for something!" Lucius saw Cornelius hiding coins behind his back.

"Look, we both understand. These are very desperate times right now. But I need those coins!"

"As do I," Cornelius screamed. "As do I, Lucius. As do I. I need to leave. Please, let me. I don't want to die here." Cornelius crouched down crying and desperately wanting Lucius to let him have the coins to leave the city. The pain in his cry could be felt and seen. "I understand. But I have a family. A wife, a daughter...give me the coins and I am sure we can work things out." Lucius too crouched to empathize with him. "So did I.....!" Cornelius was crying and screaming louder than before. "So did I...I also wanted to save my family, Lucius. And...and what you did... what the people did? What did the council do? They killed them! They slain my family in front of the whole street." Cornelius was screaming.

His anger and cry were mixing. "Look, Cornelius, that wasn't my fault nor my family's. Please, Cornelius, don't let me do this. Please give me money. And you can...come with us." Lucius was trying to convince him lifting his hands to calm Cornelius down. "No. I am not giving you the money. I will leave. And I will live." Cornelius crouched back against the wall and pulled back his hands to secure the money. Another quake rumbled the earth and debris fell from the ceiling. Debris size of the boulder. "Cornelius, we don't have time for this. Give me the money and we all will live!"

"NO..." Cornelius backed off and started running for the window. He was about to jump off from the first floor when Lucius chased him and pulled him back by his peplos. Lucius started struggling to get his hands on the money. While Cornelius was on the floor trying to save the money from Lucius. Lucius clutched Cornelius's hands and tried to reach his back. In the meantime, Cornelius used his legs and rolled himself sideways. Now, he was up and Lucius was down. "Give me the money, Cornelius!" Lucius struggling hands were going for Cornelius back pocket. "No Lucius. I am going and you are not!" Cornelius's face turned angry red. He grabbed both of Lucius's hands, grabbed one of the boulders. He raised his one hand above his head...

"...even if I had to kill you!" Then came another quake and it shook Cornelius. He got off-balanced. Lucius saw this as an opening and he suddenly crouched back and pushed Cornelius away. Lucius stood up. But so did Cornelius. Cornelius rushed towards him with a boulder in his hand. Lucius was standing still. He didn't know what to do. In a split of a second, he grabbed another boulder, douched Cornelius, and spatted the boulder on his head!

Cornelius was down. Blood spilling all over. Lucius was shocked. What did he do? He just killed a man. Another rumbling came and he spits out his thoughts and took the money out of Cornelius's pocket. He was about to leave the place when he turned around to have a last glance of his *friend*, Cornelius! His eyes exploded in tears. "Sorry, Cornelius..."

Mikkel in that room could feel the warmth of Cornelius blood. But he could also see the exploding tears of Lucius at the door entrance. The time was mourning. And so was Mikkel. Another thunder clapped and the whole place lit up white, it was about to rain. The sky turned dark and the clouds were overshadowing the sun rays. The winds were blowing faster.

Lucius ran towards his house and so was Mikkel! Lucius entered the hall where he saw everything was packed. Lucius was breathing heavily. "What happened?" Aurelia asked. "Nothing, we have got the money. Now we can leave!" Lucius ran towards the balcony to see if the boat was still there or not. "It's still there. We can make it. Let's go." Through the balcony, Lucius saw a spewing volcano waiting to erupt. Mikkel could see the now silent mountain, now became a tourist spot. Mikkel pivoted on the railing to feel the heavy winds.

Lucius ran out of his house with his family. They took the back path to reach the port fast. On his way, Maxima dropped their family painting down. She was to pick it but a pillar dropped in front of her and covered the frame. Lucius grabbed her from her belly and they gave a run for the boat. It was to leave and the volcano was about to explode. Maxima could see her family painting buried under the debris, but Lucius and Aurelia could see the destruction of Pompeii. They reached just on time and left the city. They watching the city going down forever. The Vesuvius engulfing the Pompeii and they just watched it

happening. While on the boat, Lucius's eyes were pouring with tears and near the port, Mikkell's eye was pouring with tears. The volcano exploded and the rain poured in.

It started raining heavily. But Mikkell was still standing near the port crying. He fell on his knees forward and screamed aloud. He looked at his hands, they were shaking. He was all drenched when suddenly an umbrella came above him. It was Andrew. "Mikkell, we need to leave, I think the storm is coming!"

Andrew was wearing a raincoat and after a while, he assisted Mikkell back at the exit door. Mikkell was still in shock. Andrew could see Mikkell's red eyes, but he thought not to ask or do anything. They just kept walking to the exit. There was complete silence between the two, the only sound could be heard was thunder rumbling, rain showering and lighting claps at the distance, whose white light scatters across the sky. Mikkell finally broke the silence.

"Do you know Federico?" Mikkell asked in a very sober tone without looking at Andrew.

"Federico....." Andrew started thinking.

"Federico Montana!" Mikkell said.

"Yes...yeah. But I have just heard of him. I never met him or saw him in person. Why?" Andrew said.

"He is my *father!*" Mikkell spoke out and he left the place leaving Andrew in his thoughts. Mikkell who was walking to the railway station, Andrew was still amazed and was still looking at Mikkell's wet back slowly going far and far, while he stopped at the door and kept looking at Mikkell. He didn't know this, nor Antonio told him anything about this. Another lightning struck at the distant Mt. Vesuvius and the light scattered all across the sky, making it fully visibly white. Black clouds still covering most of the sky and rain was pouring in more and more, as if it's for the last time Naples and Pompeii are receiving rain. Mikkell took the train and was off to Naples. Mikkell sitting in the train, window side, still thinking of all he saw. His thoughts were encapsulating him. The rainwater smashing on the window and running down. Mikkell could now see it. He was now understanding his father. The role of everything. All this time he was struggling with his thoughts about his father. He understood that he just had to let it go...and it will be clear and so did it happened. He was getting to know a completely new person who was his father. The thoughts he had in mind for his father were changing. He finally realized the work of his father.

The whole night it kept raining. It was not until the next day, the rain finally stopped and Mikkell showed up at the museum to have a chat with Antonio.

"Welcome back, I suppose you enjoyed your small trip to Pompeii," Antonio in his office, sitting on his chair asked. "I suppose I do."

"Well, then I suppose this will be our last meeting," Antonio asked.

"I suppose so." Mikkell nodded his head.

Mikkell sat on the chair in front of Antonio. "What happened? You look..." Antonio took a sip from his cup of tea. "Nothing..."

"So, you are returning home. Non-the-less, I need to ask. How have you enjoyed your time here in Naples?" Antonio asked.

"I am. It's time to go back home. It has certainly been...interesting and also eye-opening."

Antonio asked inquisitively, "Interesting?? I hope that includes our work at the museum too?"

"Most certainly! It has been the highest of the trip." Mikkel smiled.

"And your father, I can only imagine. I do hope you can leave understanding him more about it. What type of man he was?" Antonio stood up walking at one of the paintings on his wall. Mikkel turned his chair towards him. "I think I am starting to."

"You see this..." Antonio pointed at the painting. "Your father made this for me. He gave it as a gift. A portrait of mine. Mikkel, I don't know if you know, your father was a religious man too. Being into Archaeology and also being religious, he every time tries to look at things from a different perspective and that's what made him unique on his own." Mikkel stood up. "Your father always used to say whenever I ask him, why he mixes history and mythology. They both are separate?" Mikkel walking towards the painting. "He used to smile and say, it's all about proof, Antonio. If there lies proof, it's history, or else it's a mystery!" Mikkel was listening to him. He walked to the painting and touched it, whirling his fingers over it. Feeling every color used. He could feel the touch of his father!

Next, he left the office saying his last good-bye to Antonio and was heading back home. But he stopped to say a few words to the receptionist.

"So this is it. How are you feeling?" The lady asked.

"It had been an emotional ride for me a few days. But now I feel good. At least positive."

"And what about Naples?"

"It will certainly be a shame saying goodbye to such a beautiful city."

"So you'll be leaving us with good memories then."

"Lots of good memories. Of the things I have seen and the people I met." Mikkel looked and smiled at her. She blushed. "How can I not fall in love with this city?!"

"I hope to be included. It has been a pleasure meeting you." The lady smiled.

"The pleasure has been mine."

The day was breaking, the sun was downing. And he was visiting every place he had been told to, by the driver, the bearded coffee owner, aunt André, and every other person. He wanted to leave but with the memories...the good ones and the remembered ones. Exploring through the narrow alleys and graffiti on every wall. It made him realized why his father took refuge here. From different types of Pizzas to having an exquisite taste of deserts, he can't forget the taste. The narrow and tall buildings of Spanish quarters... the oldest known market... Galleria Umberto ...looking into the vastness of the sea near the coastal front, the cathedrals... everything he saw. Finally, the day was ending, the sun was turning orange and the rays scattering on the footpath...it was shining.

He reached out to a cafe, where to his amaze he saw that coffee friend of his. "Hey...friend!" Then Mikkel realized that he didn't even know his name. The brown bearded guy saw him. "Hey.... friend...!" He got too excited about seeing Mikkel there. He came running by through the tables and sat.

"You here...?" Mikkel asked.

"Of course me. It's my cafe. One of my branches..." the guy smiled at him and said. Mikkel tilted his lips and turned his head around to see. "*Niiiiice....!*" Mikkel said.



"That was a long nice." And they both burst into laughter. After a while of talking and drinking his usual coffee, Mikkel knew exactly what to say. The hard part of the conversation. He didn't want to, but he had to. It was sad.

"So I suppose this will be the last time we meet." The coffee owner said.

"I am sorry to say, it is." Mikkel twisted his lips in. "It looks that way. My father's place is now mine, but I haven't decided what I'll do."

Mikkel had made a friend and that was him. The guy was still smiling. "Well, I hope you have enjoyed your stay here. I know it hasn't been under best circumstances, but..." The owner paused. He was trying to hide his tears.

"It's been hard, but eye-opening!" Mikkel didn't know what to say. All he was doing is answering back straight.

"Your father..., he may not have been the greatest father, but I do not doubt that he loved you." The owner said. Mikkel takes a sip looks at his cup, then looks at him and says smilingly, "I think so too." The owner stood suddenly and said, "I suppose it's time for you to leave." Mikkel doesn't know how to react to. He slowly gets up from his chair. Mikkel reached out to hug him.

"Good-bye, my friend," Mikkel said.

"Naples is a magical place, anything is possible." The owner whispered in Mikkel's ears while he hugged him. His voice was trembling, still, he said, "Goodbye friend. We will meet soon!" The owner rushes back in the cafe holding his hand on his face and then he got disappeared. What left behind was a confused and dilemmatic person, Mikkel.

Mikkel was in his home thinking about this coffee guy and every other thing, while the sky was getting darker. He thought about the artifacts for a while when he played the music on his phone to self amuse himself and let go of his mindfulness, his agitation, his dreams! He peeked out of his balcony listening to his violin on his phone. When he remembered something...the last artifact!

The same notes, the same violin, the same music...

The statue,...the statue at the museum, the last artifact, the white marble statue of...

The white marble statue of.... statue of... Hercules!

Hercules standing in support of a stone. His right leg looked damaged.

The last artifact was a white marble statue of Hercules standing near a stone.

After visiting Antonio Guzzave, Mikkel visited the Farnese Collection at the museum. The statue he saw there was the third and the last artifact. Suddenly he remembered everything. The time winded back to as slow as to the pace of violin music which was being played on his phone. The time lengthened and he could see the vision coming. The ticking of the clock and slowing of the time. The background blurring and music still playing in its pace. This time, he was in 1787, Naples...!

# Chapter 6

NAPLES

1787

THE BOURBON PERIOD

The place was the same where Mikkel stays. The rooms were illuminating with candles and fire torches. The night spread was making the scene more dramatic. The rooms were shaggy and discolored walls. The whole room was lighting just from the candlesticks. One kept on the center table in the hall, one near the kitchen basin. The other on the table(study) where a man, probably the age of Mikkel's father was sitting and confused, probably thinking of something. In the hall, his wife, Diana was sitting in the hall playing her violin. Very slow and steady, she was playing her violin. The man stood up from the chair and walked out to the balcony to have some fresh air. Outside he could see lights from the lamps were coming out from several rooms of the other buildings. The violin still could be heard.

He went back, into the hall. Standing right in front of her, he said, "Diana please, I must concentrate!" He spoke softly trying to convince her. Diana stopped.

"Forgive me, my love. I thought these notes might soothe your mind." Diana softly spoke. The man looked at her. "Only you could love such a brute of a man." The man sat down next to her on to the chair. "Forgive me, Diana." He held his head down with his hands. "My head's weighs heavy with my master's orders."

"Then let me share the burden." She said. He looked at her and gave a smile. "My good wife. How would I live without you? I cannot see." He stood and placed his hands on her shoulders. "But it remains for my shoulders and mine alone."

Mikkel was standing there watching all this. Circling them. Diana was aghast. "Tell me what troubles you."

"Your innocence brings a smile to an old weary face." The man smiled at her. "A face that is dearly loved. Now come. Let's take a walk. Your wife demands your company." She said.

"I must remain to resolve this abomination. Please forgive me, my love." The man said. "Then you will do what is asked of by your wife. Remove those thoughts from your mind and come with me now." She extends her hand to hold his hand. "Please come. Come with me. The moon outside and it's almighty presence will surely help you with your perspective." They set outside together and in the night light where streets were lit with fire torches on the walls and candles and lamps in the houses. They were walking under the moonlight.

The bourbon period in Naples indeed bought some stability in the rule but then it created a difference between rich and poor. The marginalization started. King's rule started. The high class and low class started. People wore fashionable clothes, one looked like an old English era. Indeed it was an era of new art and culture and so the man was a part of the system. The market illuminating in the moonlight by the flames of the eternal fire. Torches

placed on every pillar and the night market and night street were as lively as the day. Everything there was glowing flame red.

The same was for Mikkel who was walking with the feet of the man. The night street was glowing bright and colorful as if a festival was happening. The live streets were leading Mikkel to the market place.

The two were walking together on the streets. "Such a beautiful night," Diana said. "Indeed it is. This feels good. Thank you for making me do this!" The man exclaimed. "You sometimes forget the world outside." They both looked and smiled at each other and they continued walking on the way. And so was Mikkel. Walking and walking into the market, they stopped by near an outdoor wine shop to sit and talk. Mikkel on the other hand, just sat in outdoors food court for no reason, until when a waiter came in asking for the order. "Welcome sir, What would you like to have?" The waiter asked Mikkel. Mikkel looked abruptly at him. "Ah...just a glass of wine! Please!" He was confused by what he was saying because the same, Diana and her husband asked for in the shop!

"My love, your mind has not left your work. You must not think more of that Hercules matter!" Diana said. "True. And I am trying to. But..." He paused. "I have spent my whole life working and trying to honor those before us, and now I have orders that not only contradict me but also my work! I cannot commit such an outrageous crime!"

"And I love you for that. But this work is that of Michelangelo, what he commission is his work." Diana softly said. "A legacy, perhaps. His legacy. And I have spent years working on this...building this...for *our* people." The man insisting on his words. "A legacy that will continue whether or not Hercules has his '*original legs*'. He was also, but a man." She argued.

"A man that defeated great beasts and slayed evil-doers to protect his people. A man not like a man that will be remembered throughout history." The man said.

"And his murder of wife and child have been forgotten. It is his heroic that will be remembered for a long time." Diana said.

"With time comes pain, suffering, war; these are the things that will be remembered. My work is nothing more than a homage to the man. To Hercules!"

"What about Art? Culture? Scholar? Are these just to be blown from the mind like a past meeting?" Diana reminded him.

"Your optimism and determination fill my heart with hope, but also sadness!" Their orders came. The man took a sip of his wine and continued. "I can only hope that they remain; and the future could learn from our mistakes."

"Tell me. How can a man of such a great distinction and honor look upon the world in such a bleak manner?"

"It is hard to see the world in another manner when the beauty we create is torn apart by a single order." The man stated.

"The beauty will remain. No matter what politics are involved, or however many pairs of legs! The beauty will remain. And it always will be." Diana stated. "As wise as you are beautiful. What have I done to deserve a woman such as you?" Diana's face was glowing shy in the light of the fire. "Who said you deserved me?" She smiled and walked up to him. "Let's go."

Mikkel was sitting there, immersed in his thoughts. When a tall, beautiful and pretty looking girl comes walking towards him. She was of Mikkel's height. She stopped right in front of him. "Excuse me. Do you mind if I join you?" As he heard her shrilling sound,

Mikkel turned his head up towards her. His sunken face glowed. His eyes froze on her. Her fair looking skin, white as milk, her ocean-deep eyes, blue as the sky, her black straight hair, smooth as silk, her lips...her soft lips. Mikkel was mesmerized by her look. He hadn't seen her before. "Excuse me..... excuse me!" She started waving her hand to and fro. Mikkel's hypnotism broke. He answered abruptly standing from his chair, "Sure...sure...please!" The girl sat opposite to him, putting his bag down, she adjusted her chair. She was wearing blue jeans with a black t-shirt inside and a check shirt over it. She was looking gorgeous. Her red handbag was adding to her style. Mikkel leaned forward on the table. "Er...do I know you?" He asked. "No. But while I was walking by and I saw you. And it felt like, I have seen you before, haven't I?" Her soft shrilling voice felt soothing to Mikkel's ears. Being confused and smiling, but more like blushing he said, "Pardon me?"

"I am sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. I just meant I've seen you in the Naples Archaeological Museum before haven't I?"

"Yeah. It might be. It's becoming a bit of a regular spot for me." Mikkel said looking at his wine. "Oh...sorry. Where are my manners! You want something. Shall I call the waiter? Waiter...!" Mikkel turned to call the waiter.

"No-no-no-no-no! I am fine. It's totally fine."

"Are you sure.!?!" Mikkel asked. "Yeah..." she smiled.

"So! Museum and all, hmm... A budding historian? Archaeologist? Or just love the silence?"

Mikkel chuckled. "No-no-no, I work in the IT industry. My father was an archaeologist. He asked me to see the place."

"Oh...your father? That's nice. Is he around here with you?" She asked.

"No, it's just me. He passed away a few years back!"

"Oh...I am sorry. I am sorry to hear that,....um..." she said. "Mikkel!" Mikkel said. "Yeah. I am sorry Mikkel," Mikkel said nothing just kept staring at his wine. The girl gave a thought and said, "Well I was thinking about taking a walk. But...being sad and alone kind of sucks. Care to join me?" She asked. Mikkel looked immediately up. His eyes popped. "Are you asking me out?"

"See, technically, we are outside right now. So, it's just a walk down the port gate. I mean it's up to you. If you like to have a company then..." She cutely twisted her lips. Persuading him to come along. She wanted him to come with her and looking with her flirty eyes, "It is a beautiful night, you see.!"

"As beautiful as you!" Mikkel confessed to her. Her shy smile glimpsed on her face. "Walking off into the night with a stranger, that's a bold move." Mikkel paused to look at her reaction. "But I don't see any reason not to come. So, of course...I will go."

They started walking together towards the port gate near the coastline. Mikkel's hand in his pockets, trying to be as cool as possible but inside an explosion was waiting to erupt. While she was walking calm and quiet, blushing once or twice.

"So, you...an archaeologist? Historian? Or...loved seeing silence?" Mikkel asked. "None of those. I..... stalk people, just as I stalked you down." Her sweet smile was winning over him.

"So, you were following me? All this time?"

"Yeah..." Her casual yeah was not so casual. Mikkel rolled his tongue and asked, "Nice. VERY Nice. But why are you following me, then?"

"Because you have something that I want." She whispered. Her ocean deep eyes looked into Mikkel's brown eyes. "And what is that, *miss...Stalker!*" Mikkel narrowed his eyes on her. "Your name?" She answered. "Oh...My name's... *Harry...Harry Houdini*, and you?"

"Me....you just named me, *Miss Stalker!*" Mikkel's eyes got bigger. "Ok...Nice!"

"I was wondering, why should I always try so hard. Get my name?"

"Deal! And you mine!" Mikkel said. They chuckled. "So, you are a tourist?" Mikkel asked.

"Yeah, actually I am from California and I am here for a tour and then I saw you and I was wondering if I could ask you out? And here I am!"

"Whoa! Are you always so open about everything, or it's just me, you are trying to get your hands with so that you could get the nuclear code.!" Mikkel said smilingly. "I wish, I could. But you are so hard to get!" She twisted her lips inwards. Her bugs bunny teeth were visible. She looked very cute. Mikkel stood there for a moment. "Come...we are just halfway through." She said. There was a great pause for a while.

"Since childhood, I am like this. You know, being open about anything and everything. Does not hesitate. I am that kind of girl. I have no secrets! And I don't keep one!" Mikkel turns at her. "Did you come alone?"

"No, I am with my sister, she slept and I crept out."

"Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?"

"Yeah. Sure. But I dare not to ask me about my name?" She warned him pointing her index finger at him. "Do you have a *boyfriend?*" Her mouth struck open and she paused and looked at him. "No. Not yet." She continued walking. "Are you interested in all these?"

"Not really. I haven't thought about it yet. You see I have just graduated and got my job and I am quite settled right now. And I am here for my first vacation. So, I don't think I need a boyfriend...!"

"Wow! That's too much of your information. You are quite an extrovert," Mikkel waved his hands. "Sorry, I know but I can't resist speaking." She smiled. "Well, then tell me your name then!" She rolled her eyes at him.

"So...you are quite a chaser. You are on my name now."

"Well at this point, I can only buy that!"

"You can have more than just my name!" And she strolled ahead smiling. Mikkel followed her. "*Acha*, on a serious note, why are we together!?" She fastened her grip on her handbag. "I don't know actually. I just thought so, and I did." She said casually. "You looked nice to me, and so I thought of.....you know to spend some time with you." Her voice softens. "So how am I?" Mikkel stopped and asked. "I.....think, you are a nice guy and I am loving your company." She acted like thinking. She stopped by an ice cream parlor. "Wanna have one ice cream?" She asked. He looked at her soft cheeks bobbing so perfect. He smiled back and said, "One please."

"You are quite intimidating!" Mikkel said. "Are you intimidated right now?" She asked while taking another small scope of chocolate frost. "What do you think?" He asked. "I would say you are doing pretty well. I still think you could have at least managed a '*hi*' when we met!" She smiled. Mikkel chuckled. "Hi, isn't the top of my chat-up list," Mikkel answered.

They reached the shore, near the port gate. The sky was shining bright under the moonlight. They stood right In front of the gate where commoners couldn't go. The moon behind the gate could be seen. They stopped there watching the tides going and coming in,

washing away everything on the shore. The voice of the sea could be heard, the waves touching the shore and taking whatever it could, back to the sea. The reflection of the moon over the water surface looked agitated but the light was shining bright on it.

Near the port gate, there was less crowd, less city light, the only visible main source of light was Moon and under the light of the moon, both could see each other, their face glittering.

"Creeps have chatted up lines. Some middle ground between 'hi' and 'my place or yours' works a charm though." She said pivoting on the railing and watching the shore. "So, how about a smile?" Mikkel also pivoted aside of her.

"A smile's a good start?" She said.

"That's easy, huh...!" Mikkel said.

"Then show me how you smile to a stranger?" She asked sanding back straight and looking at him. Mikkel earnestly smiled at her. "Hmm..... I think you can do better. That looked like the kind of smile you would give to...an old lady!" She said. "Oh... okay then. Let's see your seduction smile, then," Mikkel asked and it was his mistake for obvious reason. She smiles looking deeply into Mikkel's eyes. Mikkel looked in stunned silence. Her scarlet blue eyes sinking deep into him. She was getting closer and closer to him. He felt hypnotized. And suddenly she held back and started laughing. "I thought as much." She said. Her every flirty gesture was buying him. And then they both looked towards the endless sea.

Meanwhile, in the bourbon period, Diana and her husband also paused near the port gate and held their hands looking at an endless sea. The sound of the wavy sea, the sights of boat and gondolas, and small ships there on the port wobbling with the waves.

"This is our moment in time. One for only us." Diana turned to him and said. "What do you mean?"

"Just that. One day, this will be the moment in history. Our history. But right now it's real."

"Of all the moments in history. I'm glad this one's ours." He smiled. "Can you hear those chippings of the birds!"

"It's so soothing..." She said. "Soothing to my ears."

"True..."

"And also this will be remembered as the moment of perfection." She said.

"Under the illuminating sphere high in the sky." He said.

"And also under the speckled stars across the sky." She completed him.

"A true vision. But don't forget the grace and elegance that can possess an artist's hands."

She said. "Surely...I appreciate the art that beholds us. This world. The *Cosmos*...." He said.

"Of course my love. How Could we not? We are surrounded by a piece of exquisite art." And she waved her arms around smiling.

"Thank you for tonight, my love. You have elevated the love I have for my work, our time; and you!" And then he reaches her and under the illuminating white sphere, they kissed.

Mikkel and the girl were returning from the port gate. Still, there was a certain awkwardness at the moment. Even though Miss Stalker was trying her every flirty gesture on Mikkel, but for him, it was like she should make the first move. If I do, it would be a creep. They slowly stopped near a diversion. Mikkel slowed down and watching his shoes.

"Umm...My hotel is this way." She said pointing towards the other way. "Mine...is that way!" Mikkel's heads up looking at another way. An awkward silence surrounded the place.

Mikkel biting his lower lips while she twisting the straps of her bag. They both standing there looking everywhere but each other.

"So...I guess I have to leave." She slowly stated. "Yeah...okay." he slowly said. "Ok. Bye..." And she leaves.

"Wait...I forgot to ask?" She stopped and turned to him. "So have you made up your mind, what are you going to do?" She asked. Inside Mikkel, he was like thinking of grabbing her and kissing her but in reality, he clutched her hands to fist and said, "A...I was about to ask you the same question?" Inside her mind, she was like beating him up and then grabbing him and kissing him hard, but she tightened her grip and said, "Me? Oh, I think. I don't want to be 80 years old and look back on my life and wondering *'what if'*," She emphasized more on *'what if'*! "You know, *'what if'*, you want to do something and hesitant about, but that could change your *'what if'*." She was trying every hint, every gesture on him, but Mikkel was a tough guy to make the first move. Mikkel chuckled. "I am not even 30 yet and I am already wondering it," Mikkel said. "She waited too long. Well, I guess this is where our night ends!" She said. "Okay...wait can I see you again?" Mikkel asked. "Umm...let me see. Why? Why do you want to see me again?" Mikkel's heart started pounding hard. His blood vessels came to the top and his ears were glowing red.

"Be... be...because I enjoyed this night. Talking with you, being with you. You are nice and beautiful. And your thoughts, they are mesmerizing. The way you say your words, the way you understand, I liked that. Talking about mesmerizing, your eyes...they are so deep that I could dive right into it. Your fair skin, the soft cheeks, when your black silky hair strands fall on your face, I love the way you shove it across your soft cheeks back. An...and...and your lips. Your reddish-pink lips...I feel like kissing them for eternity but...."

Mikkel was flowing in his thoughts, he didn't realize much but when he did, she was right in front of him, watching him closely. Mikkel was embarrassed. Her eyes filled with joy. She said, "Then do it....! Kiss me!" Mikkel looked back at her, her watery eyes, he reached up close to her, pushes his both hands across her soft cheeks and kissed her.

The next day, Mikkel was in his apartment thinking and thinking. Pivot in his balcony, he was pondering over things that happened over the past couple of days. He then went inside, sat on his father's study table, took out his father's dairy, over-leafed pages to find an empty one, and started writing.

*Dear father,*

*This has been so much harder than I ever thought it could be. Naples is a beautiful city, I was never expecting to fall for it, the way that I have, even just walking around in the evening, taking in the smells of the streets, the foods, the colors and the beauty of the buildings. I now understand why you wanted me to come here and see your work. I have seen things over these last few days that I have never seen before. I didn't think art and sculpture-like these would bring so much emotion in me. They are truly beautiful. After speaking to your colleagues and people, that knew you, it as though they were talking about a completely different person. You aren't the man that I thought I knew. I wish I could understand you more. I understand now that why you had to go, to give us a better life. Time has past and we all have grown. But still, it doesn't change*

*that I wanted you and needed you in my life, more than ever, in my wonderful time. I needed a father. I needed you and you weren't there. I wish this wasn't how we would eventually talk again, but this is how it must be. I wish things could have been different. You are and have always been my father and I hope you will be able to find peace.*

*Forever your son,  
Mikkel*

In the evening, he shut the apartment close, keeping the keys with him and thanking Mrs. André for all the motherly hospitality. "Hope to see you soon, son!" She was sad that Mikkel was leaving but happy too that she was able to serve a penny of what Mikkel's father did for her. Mikkel put his diary in his pocket and Mrs. André walked him off to the street.

His flight was in the evening. He left a few hours early so that he could go to the shore point at a cliff to see the sinking sun in the sea. He stood there at the tip of the cliff and watched the setting sun. The orange rays scattering across the clouded sky. Few birds heading back to their nests. Mikkel standing still watching the sun diving into the sea. The breeze touched his face gently. The time was mourning. His serious look on that face, his condolence for every vision he saw and he had been. Mikkel closed his eyes and when he opened, he saw every person he visioned, standing at the rock cliff watching the sunset with him. Mikkel; the Egyptian sculptor; the family - Lucius, his wife, Aurelia, and his little daughter Maxima and the Bourbon family - Diana and her husband, all stood there at the cliff watching Mikkel smilingly and then at the sunset and waiting for it to disappear as they all did, *One Day!*



# **Acknowledgment**

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